

3 1761 06353740 1





Presented to the
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

by the
ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980

THE GREAT WORLD WAR



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Toronto

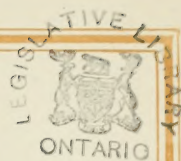


FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY

J. RUSSELL & SONS

General Sir H. S. Rawlinson, Bt., G. C. B.

47938



THE GREAT WORLD WAR

A HISTORY

Q.B.
722

General Editor:

FRANK · A · MUMBY · F.R.Hist.S.

Contributors:

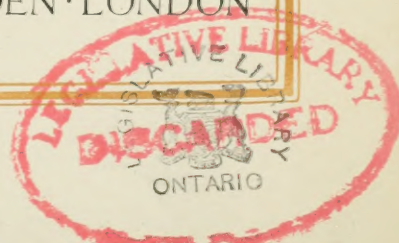
THE EDITOR : DAVID · HANNAY
C · GRAHAME · WHITE : HARRY · HARPER
EDWIN · SHARPE · GREW · & · OTHERS ·

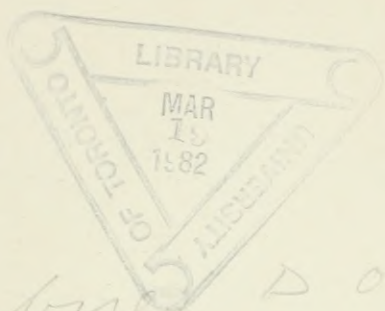
47938



VOLUME VIII

THE · GRESHAM · PUBLISHING · COMPANY · LTD
66 CHANDOS · STREET · COVENT · GARDEN · LONDON





NOTE

The chapters or sections are initialled by the several contributors, namely:—

- | | |
|----------|--------------------|
| F. A. M. | Frank A. Mumby. |
| E. S. G. | Edwin Sharpe Grew. |
| D. H. | David Hannay. |

(Vol. VIII)

CONTENTS

VOLUME VIII

CHAPTER	Page
I. LIBERATING THE HOLY LAND (June-December, 1917) - - - -	1
II. LUDENDORFF'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918 - - - - -	30
III. THE LULL ON THE MAIN BRITISH FRONT (May-July, 1918) - - -	74
IV. AMERICA IN THE WAR (April 2, 1917-March, 1918) - - - -	87
V. THE FOURTH YEAR OF THE WAR (August, 1917-August, 1918) - -	102
VI. THE ITALIAN BREACH AND RECOVERY (October, 1917-June, 1918) - -	113
VII. FROM THE AISNE TO THE MARNE (May 27-July 17, 1918) - - -	138
VIII. FOCH'S COUNTER-STROKE ON THE MARNE (July 18-August 2, 1918) - -	159
IX. THE BATTLES OF AMIENS, BAPAUME, AND THE SCARPE - - - -	176
X. THE ELIMINATION OF BULGARIA (July-October, 1918) - - - -	208
XI. BREAKING THE GERMAN LINE (August-September, 1918) - - - -	225
XII. THE DECISIVE BATTLES IN FLANDERS (September-October, 1918) - -	250
XIII. ITALY'S TRIUMPH (October-November, 1918) - - - - -	270
XIV. THE DEFEAT OF TURKEY (March, 1917-October, 1918) - - - -	282
XV. THE LAST PHASE OF THE GERMAN RETREAT (October-November, 1918) -	312

LIST OF PLATES

VOLUME VIII

PHOTOGRAVURES

GENERAL SIR H. S. RAWLINSON, BT., G.C.B.	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
GENERAL SIR WILLIAM BIRDWOOD, G.C.M.G., K.C.B.	-	-	-	-	<i>Facing p. 120</i>
GENERAL SIR EDMUND ALLENBY, K.C.B.	-	-	-	-	„ 232

COLOURED MAPS

GERMAN ADVANCE AND THE BRITISH RETREAT BETWEEN MARCH 21 AND MARCH 28, 1918	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Facing p. 32</i>
FOCH'S COUNTER-STROKE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	„ 160

THE GREAT WORLD WAR

VOLUME VIII

CHAPTER I

LIBERATING THE HOLY LAND

(June–December, 1917)

General Allenby's Record—Tributes to Sir Philip Chetwode—Situation in Palestine after Second Battle of Gaza—Falkenhayn's Plan—Re-birth of Arabia—King Hussain of Hejaz—His Army's Share in the Palestine Operations—General Allenby's Task—Strength of the Turkish Positions—Capture of Beer-sheba—Subsidiary Attack on Gaza—The Main Blow at the Turkish Centre—Enemy in General Retreat—Bulfin's March along the Coast—Enemy's New Line attacked—His Army broken in two at Junction Station—Allenby's Irresistible Advance—Death of Neil Primrose, M.P.—The Lowlanders' Gallant Record—Allenby's First Attempt to gain Nablus-Jerusalem Road—Enemy's Stubborn Resistance—The Final Advance on Jerusalem—Surrender of the City—King George's Congratulations and Rewards—Official Entry into "the Abode of Peace".

FOUR months elapsed after the Second Battle of Gaza—described in the concluding chapter of our previous volume—before the first real advance was begun in the new crusade which at long last was to deliver the Holy Land from Turkey's corrupt and oppressive rule. Faultlessly conceived from the first, the new campaign was destined to rank as the most completely successful of all the side-shows of the war, every arm of the service being co-ordinated in a plan which, from start to finish, worked like a miracle—and against a background of history which had inspired the hearts of men before, as

well as after, the birth and death of Christ.

No hint of the immemorial associations surrounding the campaign will be found in General Sir Edmund Allenby's dispatches. Brief and straightforward—as a soldier's reports should be—they are as prosaic as any dispatches of the war. Sir Edmund himself has been described as a personification of the traditional qualities of the British soldier. His fighting record, long before he succeeded General Murray in Palestine, had already marked him out as a leader of the first rank. Born in 1861, he had served with the Inniskilling Dragoons in the

The Great World War

Bechuanaland Expedition in 1884-5, as well as in Zululand in 1888, and in the South African War distinguished himself as a dashing column commander.

When the Great World War broke out, having attained to the rank of Inspector of Cavalry, General Allenby was given the cavalry division in the original Expeditionary Force. The never-failing skill and dogged determination which he displayed on many critical occasions, both during the retreat from Mons and in the opening battles of the Marne, the Aisne, and Ypres, ensured for him the command of the 5th British Infantry Corps, which, under his leadership, helped very largely to save the situation in the Second Battle of Ypres. Later, on General Munro's appointment to India, he succeeded him in command of the new Third Army on the Somme, which moved farther north in the spring of 1916 to take over the ground round Arras entrusted to our charge by the French. It was not until the Easter Monday of 1917 that the Third Army's chance came for showing its quality against the flower of the German army. On that occasion it was to General Allenby that Sir Douglas Haig assigned the crucial command of the first great attack in the Battle of Arras, and the result was a victory surpassing any previous successes of British arms—11,000 prisoners and 145 guns, besides a vast amount of other booty, being captured in less than twelve hours. Other smashing blows followed, and when the War Cabinet decided to undertake a serious cam-

paign in Palestine, later in the same year, General Allenby, whose war services had already been rewarded with a K.C.B., was the leader chosen for the task.

"When I took over the command of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force at the end of June, 1917," he writes in his first dispatch, "I had received instructions to report on the conditions in which offensive operations against the Turkish army on the Palestine front might be undertaken in the autumn or winter of 1917. After visiting the front, and consulting with the Commander of the Eastern Force, I submitted my appreciation and proposals in a telegram dispatched in the second week of July."

The Commander of the Eastern Force was Lieutenant-General Sir Philip W. Chetwode, who, it will be remembered, had succeeded General Dobell six months before. Sir Philip had already earned a tribute from Sir



Lieutenant-General Sir Philip W. Chetwode, K.C.B.
(From a photograph by Bassano)



On Patrol Duty

Edmund's predecessor, General Murray, who mentioned, at the close of his farewell dispatch from General Head-quarters of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, that he "exercised the qualities of brilliant leadership and sure judgment, and invariably inspired confidence in all ranks". General Allenby confirmed this in his own dispatch, in which he testified that the plan of operations which led to the capture of Jerusalem "was based on Sir Philip's appreciation of the situation and on the scheme which he put forward to me on my arrival in Egypt last summer", adding that it was to his strategical foresight and tactical skill that the success of the campaign was largely due.

The closing operations under General Murray—to link up the new phase of the Palestine campaign with the old—had been uneventful, apart from air-raiding and artillery-shelling, as well

as frequent affairs of cavalry outposts.

The only event of note had been a great cavalry raid in May, 1917, by General Chauvel's desert column, resulting in the destruction of the greater part of the Turkish strategic railway south of Beersheba. More than 13 miles of railway line, including numerous bridges and culverts, and vast quantities of building material, were wrecked absolutely beyond repair—save by complete reconstruction. So thoroughly had the engineers done their work that every bolt had its head knocked off, and not a single line of rail remained whole.

When General Allenby arrived on the scene he found the situation strangely resembling that to which he had too long been accustomed on the Western Front, both forces being deeply entrenched within a short distance of each other. Our Palestine army—now including a French detachment under Colonel Piépape, and an Italian detachment under Major da Agostino—extended in crescent shape on a front of 22 miles from the sea opposite Gaza, to Gamli. Facing it, and extending eastwards for miles beyond, the Turks held a powerful position which stretched, from the sea at Gaza, over a distance of some 30 miles, to Beersheba. Here, on their left flank, lay only the waterless desert, into which they imagined we would never venture to penetrate.

Gaza itself had been converted into a strong modern fortress, heavily entrenched and wired; but it was not our new Commander-in-Chief's intention to sacrifice the pick of his army in another attempt to carry it by storm.

The town which, with a little more luck, might have been captured, as indeed it nearly was, by General

tracted defence. But, as in the case of so many mighty strongholds on the Western Front, there were other ways of taking it than by direct assault.

The remainder of the enemy's line consisted, for the most part, of several powerful groups of works, generally from 1500 to 2000 yards apart, though one gap, that between the Hereira defences and Beersheba, extended for nearly $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles. All the enemy's lateral communications were good, so that any threatened part of the line could be very quickly reinforced. Both the Turks and their German masters were determined to stop our Palestine advance at all costs. They had suffered a serious set-back in Mesopotamia by the loss of Bagdad and other places, and the Russians were still in possession of Armenia.

The Turks' main hope of recovering their prestige now lay in blocking the road to the British in South Palestine, and resuming the offensive in Mesopotamia under the new leadership of General von Falkenhayn, who arrived in Syria in the early autumn of 1917 to superintend the operations on both Turkish fronts, Von Kressenstein remaining in local command of the Gaza-Beersheba line. Had this line held, the whole complexion of affairs might have changed, to the enemy's advantage.

Both armies had been strongly reinforced. In addition to London Territorials and other British troops, and the French and Italian detachments already mentioned, General Allenby was able more and more to count on the active co-operation of



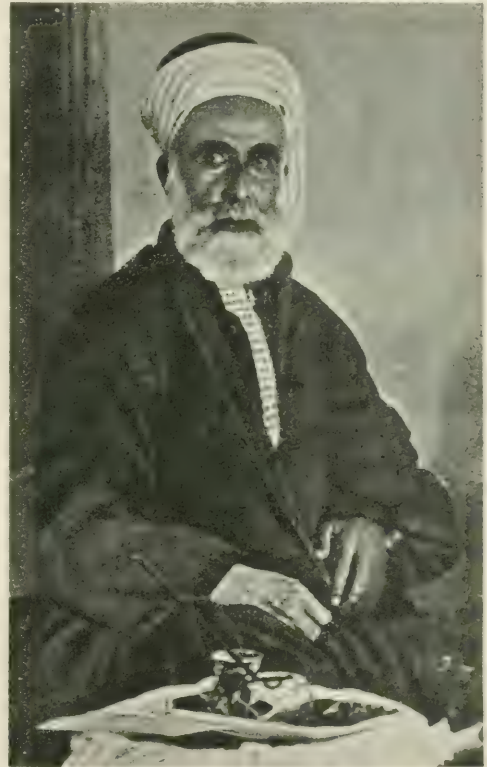
The New Kingdom of Hejaz, and its Relation to Egypt, Palestine, and Turkey

Murray's *coup de main* in the First Battle of Gaza, had made itself impregnable before the second attempt, and now offered, as General Allenby bears witness, every facility for a pro-

the Arabs under the King of Hejaz,¹ formerly known as the Grand Sherif of Mecca, Hereditary Keeper of the Holy Places, who, in the summer of 1916, had thrown off the Turkish yoke and proclaimed the independence of Arabia. The inner meaning of this somewhat unexpected addition to our strength, and the romantic story of the warfare waged by the gallant Arab troops, will form, in due course, one of the most remarkable chapters in the official history of the war. Here we can do little more than briefly record the fact that the announcement by the Arab race proclaiming its charter of independence sent a thrill through the whole Islamic world.

The Turkish Government, under foreign influence and the control of atheistical Young Turks, had been rapidly losing its validity among those who regarded themselves as the true representatives of the Moslem faith. For hundreds of years it had been the deliberate policy of the Turks to stimulate tribal feuds among the Arabs, in order to keep them in subjection and prevent anything in the shape of a national renaissance; but recent events had again thrown all the Arab-speaking peoples together, putting an end to the old religious and tribal differences. Stung to fury by the shameful acts of Enver Pasha and his followers, as well as by the increasing maladministration of their country, the people of Hejaz prevailed on the Grand Sherif of Mecca, whose family claims descent from Mahomet, to proclaim himself as King Hussain over

a free and independent country. Following upon this proclamation of kingship—a title subsequently recognized by the Allied Governments—and his capture of Mecca, the capital, and a number of other holy places, the new sovereign formed an alliance with the other independent rulers of Arabia,



Hussain I, Ruler of the New Kingdom of Hejaz

and raised several armies among his tribesmen, the commands of which he gave to his elder sons. First and chief among these was Prince Feisul, to whose brilliant services, in due course, the Lord Mayor of London paid tribute at a luncheon given in his honour at the Mansion House.

When General Allenby succeeded General Murray, in the summer of

¹ Frequently spelt "Hedjaz"—the German form, which has crept into use in many British newspapers.

1917, the Arabs, fighting, as Prince Feisul said, "for those great principles of freedom and justice which were so sacred to the Allies, and were the antithesis of the Turkish rule", were seizing every opportunity of attacking the Hejaz railway running from Palestine to Medina. They provided plenty

to form what practically amounted to a continuous line to a point south of Sheira, save for a gap between Ali Muntar, south of Gaza, and the Sihan group of works. The bigger gap still remained, however, between the left flank of the Turkish main position on the Hereira-Sheira line and the de-



French Official

Raised against the Turks: the Hejaz flag, with some of the Arab soldiers of King Hussain I

of work for all the Turkish troops along that line, and to the south of the Dead Sea, while General Allenby was completing his plans to force the Gaza-Beersheba line.

Both sides were busy during the four months of preparation which followed the arrival of the new Commander-in-Chief. By the end of October, 1917, the enemy's defences and isolated strong localities had been joined up

fences covering Beersheba; and it was against this exposed left flank that General Allenby decided to deliver his main blow. The Turks had all the advantages of position, and, more important still, of water, the supply of which was the chief difficulty that General Allenby, like his predecessor, was called upon to face. Ample supplies were known to exist at Beersheba—hence the capture of that town

was a necessary preliminary to the main blow against the Hereira-Sheira line. It was of the first importance, not only to secure these supplies, but also to make room for the deployment of the attacking force on the high ground to the north and north-west of Beersheba, from which direction General Allenby intended to attack the Hereira-Sheira line. There remained the uncertainty, of course, as to how quickly the Beersheba supplies could be developed, and as to what extent the enemy would succeed in damaging the wells before they were captured. One thing, however, was certain—no other water-supplies would be found until Sheira and Hereira had been taken.

The front of the main attack, which was to follow the capture of Beersheba, was chosen because the enemy's works at Sheira and Hereira were less formidable than elsewhere, and easier of approach than other parts of the main line. "When Beersheba was in our hands", explained General Allenby, "we should have an open flank against which to operate, and I could make full use of our superiority in mounted troops; and a success here offered prospects of pursuing our advantage and forcing the enemy to abandon the rest of his fortified positions, which no other line of attack would afford."

Success being largely dependent on surprise, the enemy was kept in doubt up to the last moment as to the real point of attack, a scheme of operations on a large scale being planned in order to maintain a subsidiary assault on Gaza while the main blow was being prepared at the other end of the

line. The defences of Gaza were kept under fire, indeed, throughout the period of preparation, beside being periodically raided; while an advance of the British line on a front of 800 yards south-west of the town on August 30, in the face of heavy artillery and machine-gun fire, had served to strengthen the impression that Gaza was still the real objective.

For the renewal of the offensive the army was accordingly divided into two striking forces, one under General Chetwode, destined to deliver the main blows on the enemy's left, and the other under General E. S. Bulfin, whose task was to command the operations on the enemy's right at Gaza, where the loyal and effective co-operation was secured of Rear-Admiral T. Jackson and the naval forces under his command, including the guns of the French warship, *Requin*.

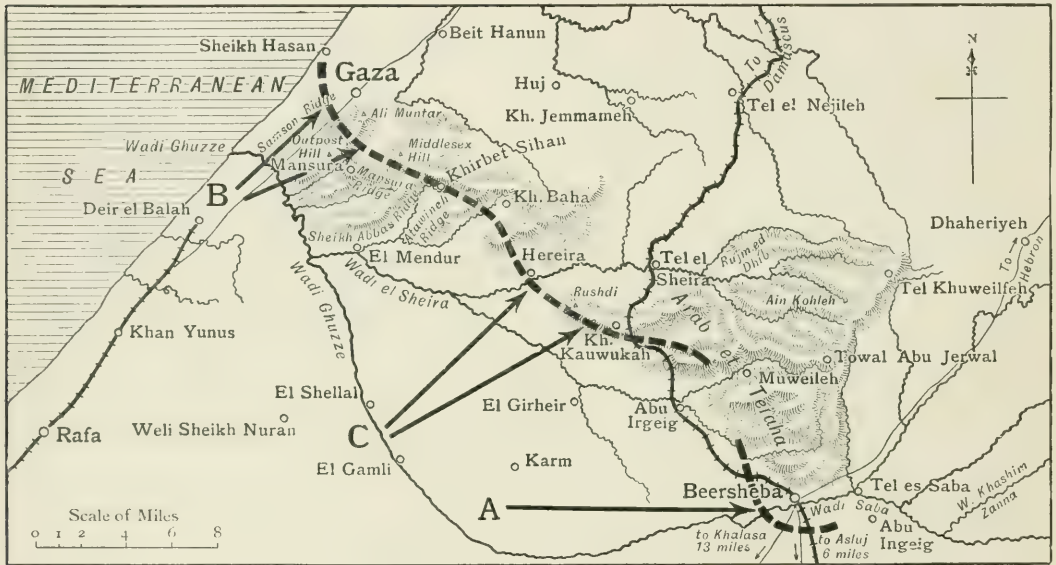
General Allenby, like General Murray, found the transport problem as troublesome as the water difficulty. The steep banks of many of the dried-up watercourses, which intersected the area of operations, limited the routes passable by wheeled transport. In many places the going was indescribably difficult. Practically the whole of the transport available in the force, including 30,000 pack-camels, had to be allotted to one portion of Sir Philip Chetwode's striking force, to enable it to be supplied with food, water, and ammunition at a distance of 20 miles in advance of Railhead.

At length, all was ready, and the date for the new offensive fixed for October 31. For several days a heavy

bombardment of the Gaza defences from the naval guns, as well as from the siege and heavy batteries which had been brought up for the purpose by rail, helped to put the enemy still farther off the scent. On October 27, however—the very morning on which the bombardment began—the enemy made a strong reconnaissance towards

and also caused the enemy serious losses. “The gallant resistance made by the Yeomanry”, adds the Commander-in-Chief, “enabled the 53rd (Welsh) Division to come up in time, and on their advance the Turks withdrew.”

This incident in no way interfered with General Allenby's plans. Three



Map illustrating the Capture of the Gaza-Beersheba Line by General Allenby, October 31–November 6, 1917

A, Attack on Beersheba (October 31) as a preliminary to the main attack (November 6). B, Secondary attacks of General Bullfin, November 1–2 and November 6. C, Main attack on Turkish centre by General Chetwode, November 6.

Karm—two regiments of cavalry and some 2000 or 3000 infantry, with guns, attacking a line of British outposts near El Girheir, where some of our London Yeomanry were covering the new railway construction which was being rapidly pushed forward from El Gamli towards Beersheba. One small post was rushed and cut up, but not, as the Commander-in-Chief points out, “before inflicting heavy losses on the enemy”. Another post, though surrounded, held its ground all day,

days later, while the guns from ship and shore still poured their shells into Gaza and its defences, final orders were given for the preliminary move to be made on the following evening (October 31) for the attack on Beersheba. At the close of that day, accordingly, the troops chosen for the task from Sir Philip Chetwode's force were concentrated, and after a successful night march reached their appointed positions of deployment in good time. When the attack de-

veloped at daybreak on the 31st the Turks at Beersheba were undoubtedly taken completely by surprise, not only by the frontal assault, but also by the flanking operation by the mounted troops—Australian Light Horse, New Zealand Mounted Rifles, and Yeomanry—who stole across the plain from the east and north-east, whence they were least expected, and finally sealed the fate of the town.

This sweeping cavalry movement—forerunner of many similar operations in General Allenby's victorious advance—had started from the oases of Khalasa and Asluj, where the water-supply had been stealthily developed for the purpose beforehand. Having reached these points on the evening of the 30th, and rested their horses, the mounted troops accomplished a night march by moonlight, in which part of the force covered 25 miles, and the remainder 35, arriving undetected in the early hours among the hills some 5 miles east of Beersheba. Thence the advance lay over an open and almost flat plain, commanded by the rising ground north of the town, and flanked by Tel-es-Saba, an underfeature of the Wadi Saba—a tributary of the Wadi Ghuzze. This underfeature was found to be strongly held by the enemy, and was not captured until late in the afternoon. Away to the north, too, where a force was sent to protect the right flank of the mounted troops on the Hebron road, hostile cavalry were met, and kept up a running fight throughout the day.

Meantime, the frontal attack on Beersheba from the south and south-west was in full swing. Here the

plan was to carry the enemy's powerful works between Khalasa and the Wadi Saba with two divisions of infantry and dismounted Yeomanry, the positions north of the Wadi Saba being masked at the same time by the Imperial Camel Corps and some infantry, while a portion of the 53rd (Welsh) Division farther north covered the left of the corps. A cavalry regiment covered the right of the attack.

Before the main advance could be attempted, it was necessary to seize the enemy's advance works in order to enable the field-guns to get within effective range for wire-cutting. This was successfully accomplished before 9 o'clock, after a preliminary bombardment, by London Territorials, who, with small loss to themselves, also captured 90 prisoners, including a German machine-gun crew.

Then came the systematic cutting of wire on the main line—considerably interfered with by the clouds of dust which obliterated the view at times and repeatedly interrupted the proceedings. At 12.15, however, the final assault was ordered, and was successful along the whole front attacked by the Londoners and dismounted Yeomanry, who, advancing with unflinching steadiness in the face of heavy fire of deadly accuracy from the enemy's guns, carried the Turkish positions in the final rush with the greatest gallantry. These Londoners and Yeomanry, as General Allenby records, finely supported as they were by the artillery, "never gave the Turks time to recover from their surprise".

In the meantime the mounted troops

were advancing across the open plain from the east and north-east in small parties, making steady but slow progress in the face of increasing opposition. In the evening, however, the Australian Light Horse, in a final charge, rode straight at the town from the east, galloping over two deep trenches held by the enemy just outside Beersheba, and, entering the town at about 7 p.m., completed the defeat of the Turks.

The day's triumph had not only put the garrison at Beersheba almost completely out of action—some 2000 prisoners and 13 guns being taken, and about 500 Turkish killed buried on the battle-field—but also laid open the left flank of the main Turkish positions for the decisive blow yet to be delivered. It was not until General Allenby's full dispatch was published in the following January that the real cleverness and ingenuity of the whole set of operations became known. At the time, even the accredited correspondents, who were purposely kept in front of Gaza, where the guns were busier than ever, thought that Samson's city was still the main objective. Arm-chair strategists at home described the British Commander-in-Chief's plan as a double attack on the Turkish flanks in order to disperse the enemy's reserves. Neither hypothesis was right. The main blow, as we have explained, was to be delivered against the Turkish centre at Hereira and Sheira.

It was a relief to everyone, however, when the news was published that the prolonged period of trench warfare in Palestine, which had succeeded the Second Battle of Gaza, had at length

given place to a new move in the right direction. Its far-reaching importance was recognized by General Maude, who, following King George's example at home, sent congratulations from Mesopotamia, where he was at that time preparing his successful attack on the Turkish positions north of Samarra. "We hope our efforts will assist yours," telegraphed General Allenby in reply, "and that our co-operation will shorten the road to victory."

Von Kressenstein was also alive to the meaning of the new chapter which had suddenly opened in the history of the campaign, bringing up all his available reserves for a sudden counter-attack in the difficult country north of Beersheba. Here the 53rd (Welsh) Division, with the Imperial Camel Corps on its right, was already advancing in order to cover the flank of our forthcoming main attack. This operation, as it happened, was somewhat delayed by transport and water difficulties, which proved greater than had been anticipated. Mounted troops were also sent north along the Hebron road to secure Dha-heriyeh, if possible. At the close of a long march the Welsh Division took up a position from Towal Abu Jerwal, 6 miles north of Beersheba, to Muweileh, 4 miles north-east of Abu Irgeig, which had been occupied by Irish troops on the same day.

On the night of November 1-2 the subsidiary attack was delivered on Gaza, designed to draw the hostile reserves from General Allenby's real objective, which he had now decided to attack at dawn four days later. The

front of the new Gaza offensive was about 6000 yards, extending from one of the main Turkish strongholds, known as Umbrella Hill, 2000 yards south-west of the town, to Sheikh Hasan, right on the coast, some 2500 yards to the north-west. The ground over which our troops had to advance was not unlike that of the sand-dunes

chapter, had borne the brunt of the campaign since they left Gallipoli nearly two years before, tramping every inch of the way from the Suez Canal. Mr. W. T. Massey, one of the correspondents on the spot, writes to the effect that nothing in their brilliant record shines more brightly than their deeds on this occasion:



British Official

With Allenby's Army in Palestine: dug-outs in the front line

of the Flanders coast, but very soft and heavy for marching, with the dunes rising in places as much as 150 feet, and the whole defended by successive lines of strongly-built trenches and redoubts.

Before the main assault could be delivered at 3 a.m. on November 2 it was necessary to capture Umbrella Hill, which flanked the advance against the Turkish works farther west. This task, carried out before midnight on November 1, fell to the gallant Lowlanders, who, as mentioned in our last

"The first wave was blown up by mines, but the second wave was not checked for an instant, and captured or killed the defenders, though subjected to most severe artillery-fire. One place particularly troublesome was Bedouin Hut, a regular little fort of machine-guns, but the platoon commander, with consummate coolness, arranged the attack in perfect style, rushed the hut, and killed all in it."

The outlying strongholds having been captured, the main assault was timed for three o'clock on the following morning, the advance being arranged

before daylight owing to the distance to be covered between our front trenches and the enemy's position. Save for a section of trench on the left, and some of the final objectives in the centre, the attack was completely successful. East Anglian as well as Scottish troops shared the honours of the day, together with a mixed force composed of Indian and West Indian contingents, and detachments from the French and Italian troops attached to the British army. Some tanks also lent a helping and valuable hand, notwithstanding the heavy handicap of the deep and treacherous sand.

It was subsequently found that the enemy had suffered heavily from our preliminary bombardment. One of the divisions holding the Gaza sector lost 33 per cent of its effectives, and had to be withdrawn in consequence, another division, in general reserve, having to be sent to replace it. Many Turks were also killed and wounded in the attack itself, and some 450 prisoners were taken.

Thus the primary object of this new battle of Gaza had been attained. Von Kressenstein had been unable to draw from this sector any troops to meet the threat on his left, and some at least of the available Turkish reserves had been needed for Gaza itself. With the capture of Sheikh Hasan and the south-western defences of the town a very distinct threat had also been constituted to the whole Gaza position, a threat which could be developed, as General Allenby pointed out, on any sign of withdrawal on the part of the enemy. Our own losses, though considerable, were, he adds, "not in any

way disproportionate to the results obtained".

Von Kressenstein, to give him his due, had not been deceived by this formidable demonstration on his extreme right. Though he could not, in consequence, spare troops from Gaza to protect his exposed left flank, he steadily increased his strength in that direction, and at every opportunity engaged our mounted troops, who, as already mentioned, were now seizing flank positions for our forthcoming main attack on the Turkish centre. By the evening of November 5 the 19th Turkish Division, as well as the remnants of the 27th, which had been decimated at Beersheba, and certain units of the 16th Division, had been identified in the fighting round Tel el Khuweilfeh.

Through this difficult hill country our mounted troops penetrated to within a short distance both of Khuweilfeh and Ain Kohleh, where the Turks were found holding strong positions, under orders not only to bar our farther progress in that direction, but also, if possible, to drive our flank-guard back on Beersheba. Several determined attacks with this object in view had already been made on the 4th and 5th, but in each case were repulsed. It was clear, however, on the evening of the 5th, that the greater part of the hostile cavalry, supported by infantry from Hebron, had been concentrated in this region.

"The action of the enemy in thus employing the whole of his available reserves in an immediate counter-stroke so far to the east," writes Sir Edmund Allenby, "was apparently a bold effort to induce

me to make essential alterations in my offensive plan, thereby gaining time and disorganizing my arrangements. The country north of Beersheba was exceedingly rough and hilly, and very little water was to be found there. Had the enemy succeeded in drawing considerable forces against him in that area the result might easily have been an indecisive fight (for the

out his original plan at dawn on the following day (November 6), and nothing was allowed seriously to interfere with it. Daybreak, accordingly, found the attacking force in position both for the main attack on Sheira and the flank attack on Tel el Khuweilfeh. In this flank attack the 53rd (Welsh) Divi-



Photographed by Captain Hurley, Australian Official Photographer in Palestine

Australia to the Fore: an attack on one of the Turk's positions north of Beersheba

terrain was very suitable to his methods of defence), and my own main striking force would probably have been made too weak effectively to break the enemy's centre in the neighbourhood of Sheira Hereira. This might have resulted in our gaining Beersheba, but failing to do more—in which case Beersheba would only have been an incubus of a most inconvenient kind."

General Allenby, however, was not to be drawn. He had decided to carry

sion, which had been fighting hard for several days past—nobly avenging their losses in the Second Battle of Gaza—were again heavily engaged. They carried Tel el Hereira itself at dawn, and though driven off a hill by a counter-attack, retook it, and captured another hill, which much improved their position. In this area the Turks suffered very sanguinary losses, the Welsh also taking some

hundreds of prisoners, as well as a number of guns. "The stubborn fighting of the 53rd (Welsh) Division, Imperial Camel Corps, and part of the mounted troops during the 2nd to the 6th November," records Sir Edmund Allenby, "drew in and exhausted the Turkish reserves and paved the way for the success of the attack on Sheira."

This attack, which began by an assault on the group of works forming the extreme left of the enemy's defensive positions, made rapid progress from the first, the Yeomanry storming their objectives with magnificent dash and resolution. Here the greatest opposition of the day was encountered, the works being strongly and stubbornly defended; but, not to be denied, the Yeomanry carried everything before them, though at considerable cost to themselves. Elsewhere our casualties throughout the day were comparatively slight.

The loss of Sheira marked the real beginning of the end of the Turkish stand in southern Palestine. Their whole defensive line, built up so elaborately, and strengthened through so many months, rolled up and collapsed within the next twenty-four hours. Foreseeing the inevitable, the Turks retired from Gaza just in time to forestall our next attack on the town—timed for dawn on November 7. Only their rear-guards remained at Beit Hanun, on the railway north of Gaza, as well as in the Atawineh and other still uncaptured positions in the Turkish centre, to enable their main body to slip away. Every effort was made to cut off these rear-guards, but

the Turks put up a desperate fight, and, though considerable captures of prisoners, guns, and other booty were made during the next few days, the bulk of them escaped.

While the troops on our left were entering Gaza at dawn, only to find that the enemy had retired during the night, the Irish troops in the centre were capturing the Hereira Redoubt at the point of the bayonet, together with about 100 prisoners and several guns, and the Londoners were similarly distinguishing themselves at Tel el Sheira. One of many gallant deeds performed that day occurred at Sheira, where four enemy field-guns had remained in action against the victorious London troops. Volunteers from among them were called for by a battalion commander, who, leading the men in person, carried the enemy's position by storm, killing the gunners, and capturing all the guns. The Londoners were hard put to it to hold the place, but they not only succeeded in repulsing repeated counter-attacks, but also in pushing forward their line a mile to the north.

Continuing their advance on the 8th, the Londoners pressed on towards Huj—formerly the Turkish headquarters—where, after driving in the enemy's flank-guard several times, and outmarching our cavalry, they came under heavy gun-fire while holding a ridge less than two miles from the Turkish lines. At this juncture the Warwickshire and Worcestershire Yeomanry came up, and the General Officer Commanding the Londoners, reconnoitring near Huj at the time, and seeing a considerable body of the

enemy with guns marching about 2500 yards away in a north-easterly direction, ordered the Yeomanry to charge. In his telegram at the time General Allenby declared that the charge was at once carried out, in face of heavy gun- and rifle-fire, "with a dash worthy of the best traditions of the British cavalry". The colonel commanding

however, were too late. The cavalry's target was not so much the infantry as the guns, and they went straight for the field and heavy pieces. The gunners did their utmost to stem the onslaught. They set the shell fuses at zero to make them burst at the mouth of the gun and act as case-shot; but nothing could stop that charge. There were twelve guns in action against these valiant men from the shires—nine German-made field-guns and three 5.9 howitzers. The field-guns banged as fast as the Austrian and German gun-crews could load them, but every enemy artilleryman was sabred by his piece. The Londoners heard the fire of all the guns stop dead almost at the same moment. Having finished with the batteries, the yeomen swept up towards the ridge again to silence the three machine-guns which had been used against them. These were captured and brought into action against the departing Turks, many of whom were thus killed with their own weapons. This brilliantly - executed and most dashing charge is considered by those who saw it worthy of a high place in the annals of British cavalry, its swift success not only resulting in the capture of the batteries at an important stage of the operations, but thoroughly routing the enemy flank-guard, and having a far-reaching effect."



Lieutenant-General E. S. Bulfin, K.C.B., commanding the left of the British Advance
(From a photograph by Langfier)

the Yeomanry, a hard-riding Master of Hounds in normal times, led his men over the ridge in successive lines, and then, racing down the slope and across the flat, took the final rise at a terrific pace.

"The Midland horsemen", writes Mr. Massey, in his account of this incident, "dashed through the left flank-guard, who, alarmed at the appearance of the white arm, threw off their equipment and tried to flee from the charging lines. Many,

It completely broke the enemy's resistance at this point, and enabled us to push on towards Huj.

While General Chetwode's troops were thus engaged in stubborn fighting among the Judæan hills, striking developments were taking place along the coast by Gaza, where General Bulfin's force, with more open country in which to manœuvre, rapidly transformed what had originally been intended only as a secondary line, into our chief line of advance. To General Bulfin's "determination and attack,

and his dash and drive in pursuit," to quote from General Allenby's generous tribute to his services, "was due the swift advance which now followed towards Jerusalem". As soon as it became known that the Turks were moving from Gaza, General Bulfin's troops were dispatched in hot pursuit. It was hard going all day, and heavy fighting at the end of it, but after an exhausting march through the sand-dunes, some Glasgow and Highland troops reached the mouth of the Wadi Hesi that evening, their object being to turn the enemy's line at this point, and prevent him making any stand there.

The Turks were entrenched on the opposite side of the wadi, on high ground, which they had been ordered to hold at all costs. It was too dark to reconnoitre, but a splendid bayonet charge carried the Scotsmen in triumph up the north bank, and won the ridge beyond, commanding Deir Sineid, the junction of the railway to Gaza and Huj. Five times the enemy counter-attacked, and on four occasions succeeded in thrusting the invaders from this coveted ridge, but every time it was won back by the indomitable Scots. At last the Turks acknowledged defeat, and retired. Other Scotsmen, as well as troops from the south-western counties, had in the meantime swung round to the right, and completed the enemy's discomfiture.

During the 8th, while General Chetwode's men were straining every nerve to cut off the enemy's rear-guards in the centre, and the Yeomanry were making their magnificent charge

which gave us possession of Huj, General Bulfin's force made further rapid progress along the more open coastal region. The Indian Imperial Service Cavalry captured a heavy howitzer and many prisoners in a smart action fought near Beit Hanun, while the Scottish troops continued their irresistible advance on the right bank of the Wadi Hesi.

At the end of the day it became known that the Turks were everywhere on the run. This was confirmed by reports from the Flying Corps, which had now completely established their mastery of the air in Palestine, and harassed the fugitive Turks with bombs and machine-guns along all their lines of retreat. Orders were accordingly issued to the mounted men on the morning of the 9th to press the enemy relentlessly. The pursuit and its sequel proved that Von Kressenstein's loss of his lines from Gaza to Beersheba had been no mere chance turn of the fortunes of war. He had been out-manceuvred throughout by a master mind faced with the problem of attacking an army which, little if any inferior in numbers to his own, had every advantage of position in elaborately prepared lines of enormous strength. "The suddenness of our offensive had surprised the enemy," to quote from the War Cabinet's Report for 1917, "and the vigour of our pursuit left him no opportunity for resistance on any of his previously prepared lines of defence, which fell one after another into our hands."

Von Kressenstein's last hope of saving Jerusalem vanished on Novem-



Drawn by Francis de Hassen

Cavalry of the Old School finish the Work of the Cavalry of the Air: British mounted patrol capturing an enemy airman before he can burn his machine

The incident depicted above—from materials supplied by one who took part in it—occurred one morning at sunrise during General Allenby's advance. The enemy pilot had been shot down, during an aerial duel, by a British airman, seen circling above. The cavalry patrol arrived just in time to make the enemy pilot, who was uninjured, surrender before he succeeded in setting fire to the wreckage of his machine, as he tried to do.

ber 13, when, having succeeded in wheeling back his shattered army, hinged on Junction Station—where the Beersheba railway branched off from the Jerusalem line—he again faced General Allenby along a front of some 20 miles from El Kubeibeh on the north, to about Beit Jibrin to the south. This position had been dictated to him by the rapidity of our move along the coast, and the determination with which his rear-guards on this flank had been pressed.

In the advance among the Judæan hills, Von Kressenstein had vainly endeavoured to stem General Chetwode's advance by threatening a counter-attack, but General Allenby knew well enough that the only force available for the purpose was too disorganized to make any effective diversion of the kind, and ignored the threat. As in the attack on the main position between Gaza and Beersheba, he was now bent on delivering a decisive blow in the centre of the new Turkish line. Here Von Kressenstein had collected all the remainder of the Turkish army—estimated at some 10,000 rifles—which could be induced to stand in another effort to arrest our advance.

In the meantime, the Lowlanders, still following in the footsteps of Napoleon along the coast, had captured, by a *coup de main*, the ruins of ancient Ascalon, the city which the Crusaders, under Richard Cœur-de-Lion, had occupied after their great battle with Saladin in 1192. On the 10th, Glasgow men of one Scottish battalion also reached the insignificant village which to-day represents the Philistine

city of Ashdod (Esdud), where, thousands of years ago, the Ark of the Covenant was brought into the stately Temple of Dagon. Here the Scotsmen were asked by the mounted Australians, with whom they now came in touch, to clear the high ground north of Beit Duras, so that their horses might have water. Seizing their bayonets, the Scotsmen did all that was asked of them, and more, without waiting to reconnoitre. In four nights these men had thus made three successful bayonet attacks over unreconnoitred ground, and Mr. Massey, who mentions this fact, questions whether there has been any more brilliant feat of the kind.

By the evening of the 11th, when General Allenby was assured of the enemy's intention to make a last effort to arrest our pursuit south of Junction Station, suitable positions had been reached for the new attack which was to break the Turkish line in two, and scatter it into separate parts. The advance troops, British, Australasian, and Indian, had maintained the pursuit in spite of incredible hardships, and, in places, of the fiercest opposition. With Railhead now left 35 miles behind, the problem of supply, especially of water, forage, and ammunition, had become increasingly troublesome. Throughout the 10th and 11th a high exhausting wind had added to difficulties already hard enough to bear, and the troops suffered considerably from thirst. Nevertheless, although progress necessarily became slow, the advance-guard of the Lowland Division had forced its way by the 11th almost through Burkah, where the

Turks, fighting hard to guard their right flank, were entrenched in two powerful lines of defence. The first of these lines had to be attacked by two Edinburgh and two rifle battalions up one glacis, and then over 1000 yards of absolutely flat ground to another glacis.

"The riflemen", wrote Mr. Massey, "made a stirring advance, swept the Turks out of the first line, and then, supported by most accurate artillery-fire, carried the second. The Edinburgh troops were counter-attacked on 'Brown Hill'. They were driven off, but came back, supported by Gurkhas, and retook the hill. The Turks left a large number of dead."

While this was happening, some mounted men to the left of the Lowlanders had pushed across the Nahr Sukereir at Esdud, and secured the bridgehead there; while, on the following day, the Yeomanry, advancing up the left bank of the Nahr Sukereir, seized Tel el Murreh, on the right bank, near the mouth. Our right flank at the same time had been secured by the Australasian mounted troops, who, extended over a wide front, pushed forward on the 12th towards Et Tineh and the enemy's left, counter-attacking the advanced-guard of Turkish forces sent to threaten their operations in this direction, and driving them back.

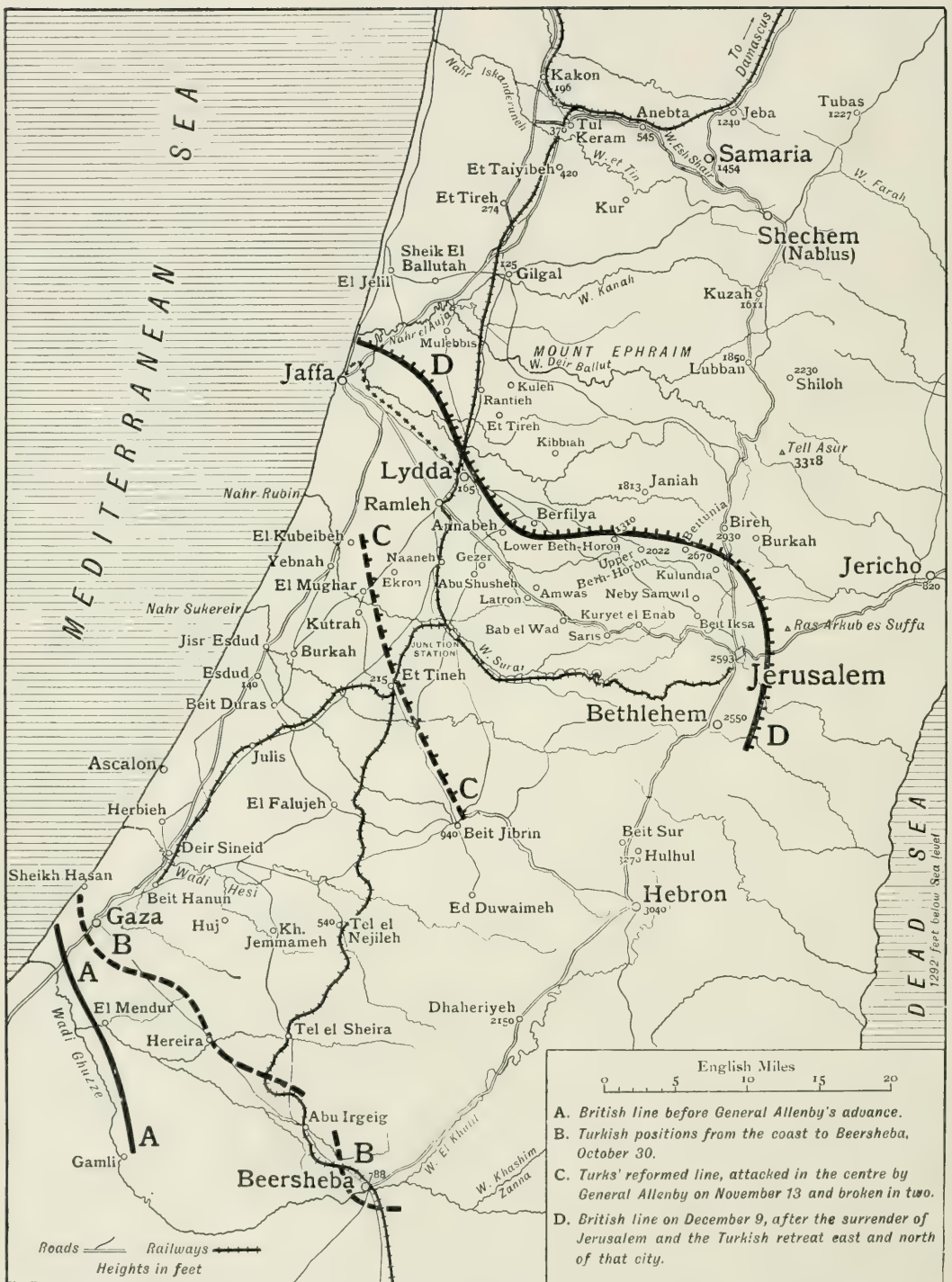
All was now ready for the attack on the Turkish centre, covering Junction Station, ordered to begin early on the morning of the 13th. The most prominent feature of the new battle-ground—an open and rolling country dotted with small villages surrounded by mud walls, with plantations of trees

outside—was the line of heights on which stand the villages of Kutrah and El Mughar. This line formed the key to the enemy's new position, and it was here that he made his most determined resistance against the turning movement directed against his right flank. Its capture by the Lowlanders, assisted by a gallant charge of mounted troops, who turned the enemy's position from the north, was described by General Allenby as a fine feat of arms. Some 1100 prisoners, three guns, and many machine-guns were taken, and the heart of the enemy's resistance was broken. By the evening, his army, sundered in two, was retiring north and east respectively, in small scattered groups. On the following morning, Junction Station itself was captured without difficulty.

Thus the British advance since the end of October had put an entirely new complexion on the campaign.

"In fifteen days", as General Allenby pointed out, "our force had advanced 60 miles on its right and about 40 on its left. It had driven a Turkish army of nine infantry divisions and one cavalry division out of a position in which it had been entrenched for six months, and had pursued it, giving battle whenever it attempted to stand, and inflicting on it losses amounting probably to nearly two-thirds of the enemy's original effectives. Over 9000 prisoners, about 80 guns, more than 100 machine-guns, and very large quantities of ammunition and other stores had been captured."

Without wasting a moment, the British Commander-in-Chief now took the decisive steps which prevented the enemy from reorganizing his forces



Map illustrating General Allenby's Operations in Southern Palestine from October 31 to December 9, 1917

either on the Judæan plateau or in the passes lower down, and ensured the success of our final attack on Jerusalem itself. These steps led first to an advance on Jaffa, Jerusalem's historic seaport, thus clearing our seaward flank, and then to the sudden forcing of an entry from the Maritime Plain to the Judæan Hills in order to obtain a hold of the one good road which crossed the range from Shechem, or Nablus, to Jerusalem. Jaffa was occupied on the 16th without opposition, the mounted Australasians, upon whom this task devolved, being welcomed with open arms by the natives, who, as everywhere among the liberated towns and villages of Palestine, were obviously thankful that Turkish misrule had come to an end.

Every yard of the British advance had been over sacred ground. Two days before (November 14), Ekron, the last of the Philistine cities still outstanding, was brought under our control. There had been a fierce fight that morning 6 miles south of Jaffa, where the Turks, making a determined counter-attack, reached within 15 yards of the line held at this point by the New Zealand Mounted Rifles. With a dashing bayonet charge, however, the New Zealanders drove back the enemy with heavy loss. By the following evening both Ramleh and Ludd, or Lydda (the reputed birth-place of England's patron saint, St. George), were captured, the mounted Anzacs taking several thousands of prisoners, together with a number of machine-guns.

Flanking the advance along the

railway to Ramleh, a prominent ridge rises out of the low foot-hills covering the main road from Ramleh to Jerusalem, and marks the site of ancient Gezer, the royal city of the Canaanites, which had been presented by the King of Egypt to his daughter on her marriage to Solomon. Here, in the neighbouring village of Abu Shusheh, a hostile rear-guard had established itself, and provided the outstanding feature of the various engagements on November 15, the Berks, Bucks, and Dorset Yeomanry attacking from the south, while the infantry advanced from the west. It was in the decisive charge which followed up the ridge that Lord Rosebery's younger son, himself a politician of exceptional promise, the Right Honourable Neil Primrose, M.P., was killed, after serving with the Royal Bucks Hussars in Gallipoli and Egypt, where he had won the Military Cross for leading a similar charge against the Senussi. His cousin and brother-officer, Major Evelyn de Rothschild, had fallen while leading his men with great gallantry in the charge of the Yeomanry Brigade which had played so large a part in the victory of El Mughar only a few days before. On the 15th the Yeomanry had been ordered to take the ridge at Abu Shusheh at all costs.

"We went part of the way dismounted," wrote another brother-officer, who was wounded shortly afterwards, Captain J. D. Young, M.C., in a letter home that was quoted at the time in the *Daily Telegraph*, "and then led our horses up, and charged again. Probably if we had not we should have been wiped out, as they outnumbered us six to one; but they hate the sight of our swords, and just as we reached the

crest of the mountain (at least it looked like a mountain) they cleared. It was a wonderful sight. . . . We buried poor Neil this morning. I was one of the bearers. He was a very gallant fellow."

The mounted troops, who had been marching and fighting continuously since October 31, had now advanced a distance of 75 miles, measured in a straight line from Asluj to Jaffa, while the infantry had covered a distance in nine days of about 40 miles, with two heavy engagements thrown in, and incessant advanced-guard fighting. The Lowland Division had distinguished itself by covering, in this period, no fewer than 69 miles.

Though the railway was being pushed forward with the utmost energy, and every opportunity taken of landing stores at suitable points along the coast, it was now necessary to mark time before the final advance on Jerusalem until further progress had been made with railway construction. This was the moment chosen by General Allenby for the sudden forcing of an entry from the Maritime Plain to the Judæan hills in order to seize the road from Nablus to Jerusalem, and prevent the enemy from reorganizing their defence in the passes.

The strategy of invasion through Palestine is extremely difficult, from whichever direction it is undertaken, and nowhere more so than among the narrow passes leading from the seaward plain to the Judæan Plateau. In earlier wars these passes had seldom been forced, and from time immemorial had brought disaster upon invading armies. Where many others

had failed, General Allenby succeeded by acting at once, and so timing his entry from the plain as to take the enemy completely by surprise. Even so, the difficulties of reaching the Nablus road at the first attempt proved insuperable, though sufficient was accomplished to guarantee that the con-



Captain the Right Hon. Neil Primrose, M.C., M.P.,
killed in action on November 15, 1917
(From a photograph by Hoppé)

quest of the plateau, as well as the capture of Jerusalem, could now only be a mere matter of time.

Along General Allenby's intended line of advance only one good road—that from Jerusalem to Jaffa—traverses the hills from east to west. For nearly 4 miles, between Bab el Wad ($2\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of Latron) and Saris, this road is cut through a narrow defile—well known to every traveller from Jaffa to Jerusalem—which could

have been made impregnable if the Turks had been given time to fortify it and to hold it in strength. As it was, they were only able to damage it in several places before our infantry—Lowlanders and London Territorials, West Country regiments, and others—began their advance on November 19, one portion, with its right flank protected by Australian mounted troops, passing through this Gate of the Pass and capturing Kuryet el Enab on the following day at the point of the bayonet. Thence the advancing troops were ordered north towards Bireh by a side track in order to avoid any fighting in the close vicinity of the Holy City. The remainder of the infantry, marching through the hills to the north, had meantime supported this movement by an advance from Berfilya towards Beit Dukka.

Two days before the infantry began their advance the Yeomanry had started to push through the hills from Ramleh direct on Bireh, by way of Annabeh, Berfilya, and Lower Beth-Horon¹. By the following evening one portion of the Yeomanry had reached as far as Lower Beth-Horon, and, on the 20th, arrived within 4 miles of their destination on the Nablus-Jerusalem road, but were stopped by stubborn opposition about Beitunia. Advanced parties succeeded in fighting their way to within 2 miles of the road by the afternoon of the 21st, other mounted troops delivering an attack at the same time on Beitunia. In the meanwhile, one body of infantry was moving

north-east towards Bireh through Biddu, and reached Nebi Samwil the same evening, though the track was found impossible for wheels, and was under hostile shell-fire all the time. Nebi Samwil stands on a ridge nearly 3000 feet high, commanding a clear view of Jerusalem, 5 miles away. Its mosque, holding the reputed tomb of the prophet Samuel, was treated with scrupulous care by the British, but was vigorously shelled by the Turks as soon as the ridge was captured.

"The positions reached on the evening of the 21st," to quote from General Allenby's dispatch, "practically marked the limit of progress in the first attempt to gain the Nablus-Jerusalem road. The Yeomanry were heavily counter-attacked, and fell back, after bitter fighting, on Beit ur el Foka (Upper Bethoron). During the 22nd the enemy made two counter-attacks on the Nebi Samwil ridge, which were repulsed. Determined and gallant attacks were made on the 23rd and on the 24th on the strong positions to the west of the road held by the enemy, who had brought up reinforcements and numerous machine-guns, and could support his infantry by artillery-fire from guns placed in positions along the main road. Our artillery, from lack of roads, could not be brought up to give adequate support to our infantry. Both attacks failed, and it was evident that a period of preparation and organization would be necessary before an attack could be delivered in sufficient strength to drive the enemy from his positions west of the road. Orders were accordingly issued to consolidate the positions gained, and prepare for relief."

Nevertheless, though the final goal had not yet been reached, the issue had been placed beyond doubt by

¹ It was at Beth-Horon that Joshua, fighting the five kings of the Amorites, invoked the sun to "Stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon".

the speed and determination with which the advance had been pressed. Otherwise, as General Allenby remarks, "the enemy would have had time to reorganize his defences in the passes lower down, and the conquest of the British would then

on to further sacrifices, no doubt, by Enver Pasha, who had rushed down from Constantinople in a high state of alarm to see if anything could be done to prevent the loss of Jerusalem. Enver Pasha, however, did not stay long enough to witness the humilia-



Photographed by Captain Hurley, Australian Official Photographer in Palestine

New Crusaders in the Holy Land: Australian Light Horse passing through Bethlehem on the march to Jerusalem

have been slow, costly, and precarious". From the positions already won, the final attempt could now be prepared and delivered with every prospect of success.

The line, thus consolidated, extended from Kustul by the Nebi Samwil Ridge, Beit Izza, and Beit Dukka, to Lower Beth-Horon, and was fiercely attacked by the discomfited foe, spurred

tion of that inevitable event. Djemal Pasha, from his head-quarters at Damascus, also endeavoured to reach the threatened city before it was too late, but the Arabs blew up his train while he was on his way, and he narrowly escaped with his life. Falkenhayn himself arrived from Aleppo, but evidently regarded Jerusalem's case as hopeless, and left

three days after the British victory at Junction Station, with promises to send what reinforcements he could.

Ali Faud Pasha, who commanded the Turkish forces in the Jerusalem district, was determined to save the city if possible, even yet, in spite of his German advisers. Obtaining reinforcements, representing the flower of the Turkish army, he threw them, time after time, against the new British line. Here and there our advanced posts were driven back, but every effort cost the enemy dearly, and in no way impeded the progress of General Allenby's preparations. Existing roads were improved, and new ones constructed to enable heavy and field guns to be placed in position, and ammunition and supplies brought up.

Having fixed December 8 as the date for the renewed attack, the British Commander-in-Chief ordered up the Welsh Division, which had been holding its positions north of Beersheba ever since its brilliant victory at Khuweilfeh a month before. With a cavalry regiment attached it now formed the right column of the new advance on Jerusalem, and began to march on December 4. Two days later, meeting with no opposition, it had passed through Hebron, the burial-place of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and at one time the head-quarters of David before himself advancing on Jerusalem to make that place the capital of his kingdom. On December 7, however, unluckily for General Allenby's battle on the morrow, the weather broke, and prevented the right column from reaching the positions assigned

to it some 3 miles south of Jerusalem by dawn on the 8th. For three days rain fell incessantly, rendering the roads almost impassable—quite impassable, indeed, for mechanical transport—and covering the hills with mist which rendered observation from the air and visual signalling extremely difficult. The right column was delayed, not only by the mud and fog, but also by roads blown up by the enemy.

The rest of the attacking troops moved into their positions of assembly during the night of the 7th, and, assaulting at dawn on the following day, soon carried all their first objectives, and pressed steadily forward. The Londoners faced a formidable line of works between Ain Karim (Miriam's Well) and Deir Yesin, which was full of entrenchments and bristled with machine-guns.

"One brigade", wrote Mr. Massey, "was to make a frontal attack; another was to turn the enemy defences by climbing up a spur south-west of Ain Karim village. To do this the troops had to clamber down a very steep mountain-side into a deep valley, then to climb up terraced spurs to works on the top. The brigade which was entrusted with the turning movement was equipped with packs, and had to make roads as it went along. When it got to the top it found a battalion of Turks in position, and had strong fighting before winning its ground. Then the two brigades together stormed the main line of works before daylight, and by seven o'clock their irresistible attack had given us the whole western defences of Jerusalem."

It was not to be wondered at that progress was slow in the face of such obstacles. The mere physical strain

of climbing the steep hill-sides and crossing the deep valleys was sufficient to render a rapid advance impossible. Artillery support, too, was almost out of the question, owing to the difficulty of moving guns up such steep ground. Two howitzers were at length brought up, after herculean labours. Hereupon the whole of the brigade, making a further attack with fixed bayonets, carried the position with an overwhelming rush, and swung north-east again towards the Nablus road.

The right column having, as already explained, been held up on the march south of Jerusalem, the London troops were forced to throw back their right and form a defensive flank facing east towards the city, on the western outskirts of which considerable rifle- and artillery-fire opposed the advance. Owing to this delay, it was decided early in the afternoon to consolidate the line gained, and to continue the attack next day, when the right column would be in a position to throw its weight into the scale. The dismounted Yeomanry in the meanwhile had stormed the difficult Beit Iksa spur in spite of the enemy's heavy and accurate artillery-fire, and pushed beyond. Nightfall found our line running from Nebi Samwil to the east of Beit Iksa, through Lifta, to a point about a mile and a half west of Jerusalem, whence it was thrown back facing east. West and north-west of the city all the enemy's prepared defences had been seized, and our troops were within a short distance of the Nablus-Jerusalem road. Both the Yeomanry and the London troops, as

General Allenby remarked, had displayed great endurance in difficult conditions. "The London troops especially, after a night march in heavy rain to reach their positions of deployment, had made an advance of 3 to 4 miles in difficult hills, in the face of stubborn opposition."

When the attack was resumed next morning it was soon evident that General Allenby's strategy, and the valour of his troops, had already won the day, and that before many hours were over Jerusalem would at length be theirs. Ever since midnight the Turkish troops had poured out through the gates in sullen retreat eastwards, leaving a rear-guard on the Mount of Olives to cover their flight. It fell to the Welsh and other troops of the belated right column to deal with these—and they dealt with them very effectually. Having overcome their difficulties on the march, they had also driven the Turks back from Bethlehem, the holy village itself happily remaining uninjured in the strife, thanks to the forbearance of our troops in not replying to the enemy's galling artillery-fire. They now occupied a position east of Jerusalem, across the Jericho road, while the London troops and Yeomanry, driving back the Turkish rear-guards in the north, held a line astride the Nablus road above the city. In this way Jerusalem was completely isolated, the last official to leave the city being Izzet Bey, the Governor. All doubts regarding the enemy's intentions were removed about noon, when he sent out a *parlementaire* and formally surrendered the city.



Omani Photograph

The Liberation of Jerusalem: General Allenby making his official entry into the Holy City on December 11, 1917

Thus was Jerusalem won on this momentous 9th of December, 1917, without a shell or a bullet so much as touching one of its sacred stones. "Joining with his people throughout the British Empire in welcoming the joyous tidings of this memorable feat of arms", King George awarded General Allenby the G.C.M.G., while Lieutenant-Generals Bulfin and Chetwode each received the K.C.B., Major-General Bols, Chief of the General Staff—who "has done brilliant work", wrote General Allenby in his dispatch, and "is a General Staff Officer of the first rank"—was awarded the K.C.M.G.

In the whole course of these eventful operations from October 31 to December 9, over 12,000 prisoners were taken, together with about 100 guns of various calibres, many machine-guns, more than 20,000,000 rounds of rifle ammunition, 250,000 rounds of gun ammunition, and a vast amount of miscellaneous booty. Many aeroplanes were also destroyed by our airmen, or burnt by the enemy to avoid capture.

Immediate care was taken to safeguard the sacred places of Jerusalem; but while other Holy Sites of the Christian and Jewish religions were placed under guards belonging to those faiths, a special request was sent to the Mohammedan guardians of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to resume their time-honoured duties in remembrance of the magnanimous act of Caliph Omar, who protected that church when he captured Jerusalem in the seventh century. Two days later, symbolizing the fact that

he came, not as conqueror, but as liberator, General Allenby made his official entry into the Holy City on foot. Without pomp or pageantry of any description—significant contrast to the spectacular entry of the German Emperor nineteen years before—but accompanied by the military attachés of France, Italy, and the United States, as well as by the commanders of the French and Italian contingents, he walked through the Jaffa Gate and straight on almost to the entrance to David Street. Then, swinging to the right, he mounted the steps in front of the gateway of David's Tower, where he read the proclamation which constituted the city's new charter of freedom. Having notified his desire that every person should pursue his lawful



Major-General L. J. Bols, K.C.M.G., General Allenby's
Chief of Staff
(From a photograph by Swaine)



The Via Dolorosa, Jerusalem—the way by which Christ passed to Calvary

form of the three religions, will be maintained and protected according to the existing customs and beliefs of those to whose faiths they are sacred.”

The proclamation having been read in Arabic, Hebrew, and Greek, as well as in English, French, Italian, and Russian, General Allenby turned with his *entourage* towards the barrack square, where the Mayor of Jerusalem, the Sheikhs in charge of the Mosques of Omar and Aksa, and representatives of the Jewish communities, and the Syrian, Greek, Armenian, Abyssinian, Anglican,

business without fear of interruption, he continued:

“Since your city is regarded with affection by the adherents of three of the great religions of mankind, and its soil has been consecrated by the prayers and pilgrimages of multitudes of devout people of these three religions for many centuries, therefore do I make known to you that every sacred building, monument, holy spot, shrine, traditional site, endowment, pious bequest, or customary place of prayer, of whatever

Latin, and Orthodox Churches were all presented. These simple acts of courtesy, followed by General Allenby’s departure through the Jaffa Gate, as unostentatiously as he came, fittingly closed a ceremony which meant that Jerusalem—“The Abode of Peace”—for the first time in all its troubled history, at length enjoyed the prospect of fulfilling the promise of its name.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER II

LUDENDORFF'S CAMPAIGN OF 1918

PART I.—The Second Battle of the Somme—Lessons of Cambrai—Expectations of the German Spring Offensive—Balance of Forces—Preparing for the Shock—The "Wing of Sacrifice"—Raids—Forecasting the Issue—Disposition of the British Armies—March 21—The Great 50-mile Attack—The Second Day's Extension—The Ominous Third Day—The German Triumphant Dispatch: "The Battle Won"—The First Break at La Fère—Struggle of the Fifth Army—The Third Army stands firm—Second Day: the Crozat Canal forced—The Break-through at Beauvois and Vaux—Decision to fall back to the Somme—Abandonment of the Péronne Bridgehead—Ham lost—Attack at the Junction of the Third and Fifth Armies—The Partial German Success and its Cost—Conference between Foch and Haig—Another Danger-point passed—Attempt to break the La Fère Pivot—French Reinforcements—New Attack on 4th and 5th Corps—Approaching Stability North of the Somme—The Hard-pressed Line South of the Somme—The Fight at Nesle—Carey's Force—Attempts to sever British Fifth and French Third Armies—General Foch, Generalissimo, March 27—Erroneous Withdrawal of the Albert-Bray Line—Effects of the Blunder—Another Touch-and-go Reprieve—General Rawlinson's Command—The German Attack Slackening in Effectiveness—The Strong Repulse of the Germans on the Arras Front—The Second Battle of Vimy Ridge—German Failure on Both Sides of the Scarpe—The Last Throw—The Great Thrust brought to a Standstill—Its Cost; the Reasons.

PART II.—The Battle of the Lys—The Depleted Flanders Front—The German's Quick Decision—The Attack on April 7—Break-through in the Portuguese Sector—Extension of Attack from La Bassée to the Bois Grenier—The Feat of the 55th Division at Festubert—The Gap at Estaires—Line of the Lawe River—Attack on the Messines Ridge—Withdrawal from Messines, Estaires, and Armentières—The Repeated and Fruitless Attacks at Givenchy—The Thrust towards Hazebrouck—Stopping the Leak at Merris—The Fight in Front of Bailleul—The Work of the 4th Guards Brigade—Withdrawal from Neuve Eglise and Bailleul—The Paschendaale Ridge abandoned—French Reinforcements—First Attack on Mont Kemmel Position—Another Attack at Festubert and Givenchy—Second and Successful German Attempt to take Mont Kemmel—Repulse of the Last German Attack on April 29—Locre regained—The Salient held.

THE First Battle of Cambrai, as it was fought by General Byng and countered by General von der Marwitz, was not one of the decisive engagements of the war, but more than any other it marked a turning-point in the war's tactics. It sounded the first trumpet-call of open warfare; its plan of action was the embryonic pattern on which the greatest battles to follow were fought; it revealed the German weakness, but, still more, the German strength. General von der Marwitz, on the eve of his counter-attack, published the following order to his troops:—

"Soldiers of the Second Army! The

English by throwing into the fight countless tanks on November 20 gained a victory near Cambrai. Their intention was to break through, but they did not succeed, thanks to the brilliant resistance of the troops who were put in line to check their advance. We are now going to turn their abortive victory into a defeat by an encircling counter-attack. The Fatherland is watching you, and expects every man to do his duty."

There is a want of originality about Von der Marwitz's order; but it embraces some truths and conceals others. It admits that the Germans were surprised; and if Cambrai was not converted into a British defeat, the Germans made a very fine attempt at the conversion, which was indeed averted

by the British troops, and not by the Intelligence Department. The way in which Ludendorff, the German Commander-in-Chief, massed an unexpectedly large number of divisions for the attack was in the highest degree creditable to German ability. Among them were divisions from Russia which our side only knew to be on the spot when they broke into our positions. One may perhaps say that if the British Commander-in-Chief was surprised, he at any rate unmasked some of Ludendorff's preparations; and the price paid was not disproportionately high. It revealed the magnitude of the assault which the British armies would have to sustain in the spring.

That sword of Damocles was clearly visible to soldiers during the winter of 1917-8. There were many rumours that Ludendorff intended to employ his great "mass of manœuvre" elsewhere; that he meditated an attack on Italy which should irrevocably cast her out of the war; that a project similar in aim was afoot on the Salonika front; that Von Falkenhayn, whose presence in Aleppo was loudly advertised, was to help the Turks to fling the British out of Mesopotamia or Jerusalem, if not both; but no soldiers of perspicacity believed that the Germans either could or would dissipate their forces to forego that great attempt on the Western Front which alone could forestall the placing in action of a decisive American factor. The attention of the public was directed during the winter to other fronts and other occurrences—to the advance of Allenby's lines from the Mediterranean coast to Bethel; to the eviction of Von Lettow

from East Africa; to the sinister capers of the Bolsheviks in Russia; or to the attempted dash of the *Goeben* and the *Breslau* from the Dardanelles. But soldiers of repute, British and French, never lifted anxious eyes from the lines that ran from Nieuport to the Vosges, unless it were to turn them speculatively towards those Riga divisions which Ludendorff was so sedulously and secretly training in the offensive, or to those guns, ever arriving, which the treachery of the Bolsheviks had released.

Part I.—The Somme Battle of March–April, 1918

It was the opinion of competent authorities that both the French and the British must lose men and guns, and give ground, in the spring; it was their consolation that if the attack were made and resisted the war might be brought to an end in 1918. Sir Henry Wilson was so sure that the attack would be made that he stated to the War Cabinet both its probable date and the locality in which it would be chiefly developed; and, at this distance of time, Mr. Bonar Law's announcement in the House of Commons on March 7, 1918, of his scepticism as to whether the great attack would really be made, seems inexplicable except as an elaborate attempt to mislead the enemy. Mr. Bonar Law, nevertheless, added reasons for his scepticism which are scarcely consistent with such a theory, and, since they were afterwards called in question by General Sir F. Maurice (May, 1918), may be recorded here. He

asserted that on the Western Front the Allies had "a slight superiority of men and guns" and an "overwhelming superiority of aircraft". By the side of this valuation of the Allied forces may be put Sir Douglas Haig's estimate in his statement introducing the account of the operations of March and April. "The strenuous efforts made by the British forces in 1917—" he remarks, "efforts which embraced the bloody struggles to conquer completely the Flanders ridges, and to which were added at the end of the year a fight at Cambrai prolonged beyond all expectations—had left the army at a low ebb in regard both to training *and numbers*. It was therefore of the first importance, in view of the expected German offensive, to fill up the ranks as rapidly as possible and provide ample facilities for training."

Both with regard to numbers and training the British Commander-in-Chief was faced with formidable difficulties. The offensive operations to which his forces had been committed in 1917, and which had been planned without the suspicion that the breakdown of Russia would demolish all the hopes entertained of their decisive effect, had left the British and, to some extent, the French armies in a situation not altogether unlike that of General Cadorna's Italian armies before the Caporetto disaster. That is to say, they had pushed forwards at given points on the assumption that their offensive operations would continue, and not that they would be called on to exchange their offensive policy for one of defence. Caporetto

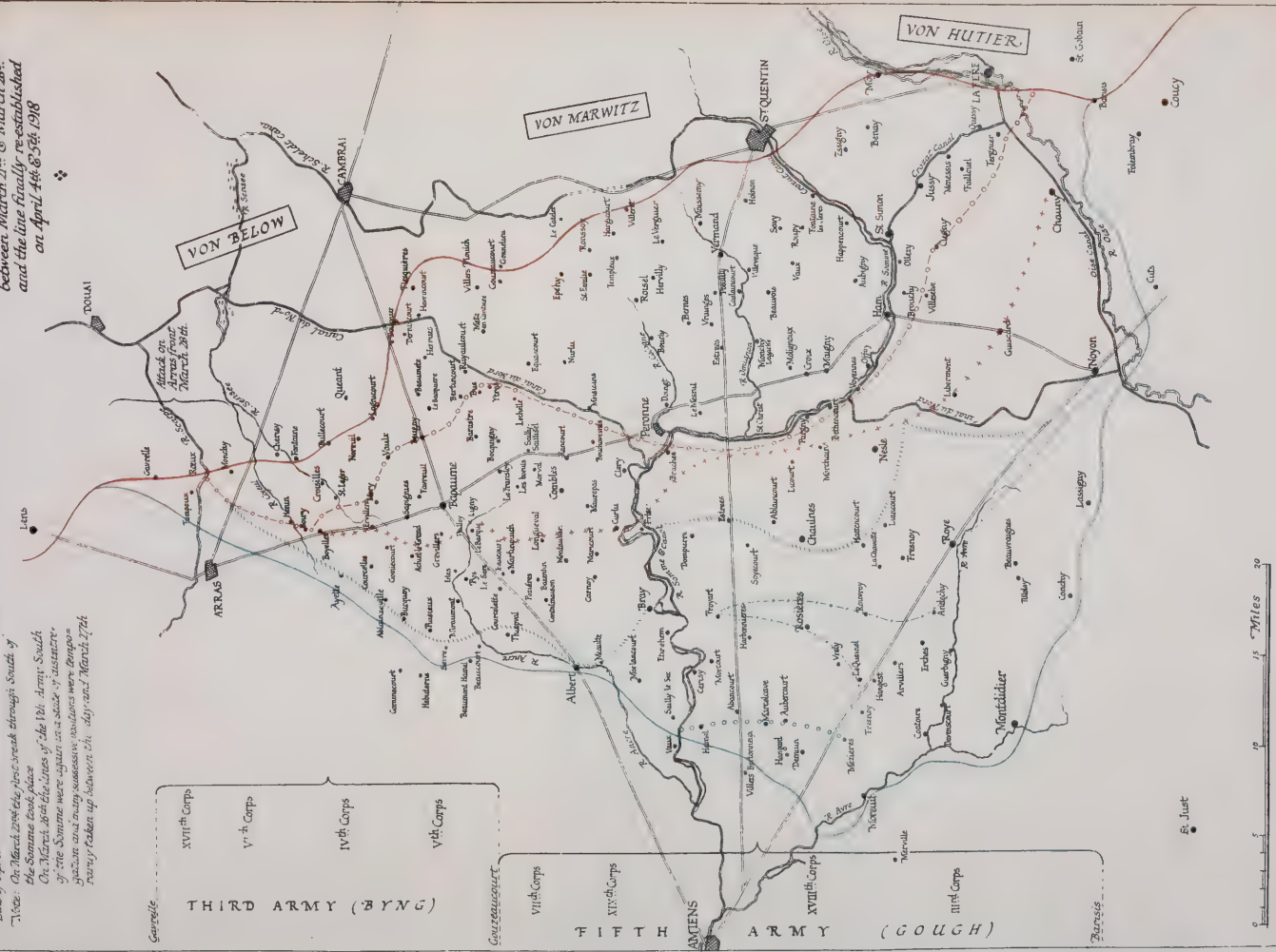
warned them. They began rapidly on the necessary work of consolidating their new positions. To the tasks of improving the front-line defences, and of constructing lines on ground captured from the enemy, was added the new task of building up strong defensive positions far behind the lines they held, as a precautionary measure.

If, and when, the German drive took place, it was certain that it would result in some dent in the Allied lines, some loss of territory and positions, and it was necessary to have prepared positions to which to retreat. It needs no effort of imagination to perceive what the effect was on the activities of Sir Douglas Haig's forces during the winter. Every man that could be spared was put on to the work of remodelling old defences and creating new ones. Roads and railways had to be built; and all the efforts of the labour units were not sufficient for the task without the co-operation of men who otherwise might have been put into training for fighting, and to whom training was actually very necessary, seeing that for the new offensive which would have to be met new defensive tactics would have to be employed. Thus Sir Douglas Haig, in sharp distinction from General Ludendorff, who was training and had been training large bodies of men for offensive operations, had to divert soldiers from the necessary training in defensive fighting to the task of building defensive positions. Consequently, while it was true that there was no great discrepancy in the numbers of the armies facing one another, the superiority of bayonets, as of trained fight-

Line of March 21st
 General line March 23rd
 General line March 24th
 General line on morning of March 26th
 Successive lines of Defence March 26th
 Line of April

Note: On March 26th the first break-through south of the Somme took place.
 On March 28th the lines of the 1st Army South of the Somme were again in a state of disintegration and many successive positions were being rapidly taken up between the 24th and March 27th

Map Showing **GERMAN ADVANCE** and the **BRITISH RETREAT** between March 21st & March 26th and the line finally re-established on April 4th & 5th 1918



ing men, rested with the Germans, and was considerable.

Moreover, it seems not improbable that the value of the Lewis gun in defensive fighting had been overrated by the Army Council, and had been held by them to be a substitute for numbers. Defensive fighting in 1918 took the form of aligning the men

of ten battalions were a good deal short of the former bayonet strength of the same number—but it also affected the fighting efficiency of the units, because a system of handling new to the subordinate commanders was thereby introduced.

Last of all, in deference to the urgency of the French, who wished to



Official Photograph

Dismounted Cavalry on the Western Front: firing-line of a patrol of Jodhpur Lancers

in depth; so that either locally or over large areas an attacking enemy would find obstacles increasing the farther he penetrated; but for these tactics men were not less necessary than before. Sir Douglas Haig remarks, nevertheless, that under instructions from the Army Council a reorganization of divisions from a thirteen-battalion to a ten-battalion basis had taken place. Not only did this reduce the fighting strength of the army—seeing that sixty divisions

establish a strong mass of manœuvre of their own soldiers, and, in order to do so, must shorten the line held by their front-line troops, the British forces were asked to extend their line. The additional length taken over by Sir Douglas Haig was 28 miles, taking the line down to Barisis just south of the Oise, and bringing up the British holding to 125 miles of a front that was liable to a heavy attack along the whole of it. This disposition fully ensured that the British armies would

have to do their bit. In the events that followed, their liability took the form of being, in the expression of a French military writer, the "wing of sacrifice"—it was on them that the first and heaviest of the German blows fell.

It is not likely that any dispositions of the Allied forces, short of a disposition based on greatly superior numbers—which they did not then possess—could have deflected the blows. Possibly that closest unity of Allied Command which the threat of disaster at last brought about, after it had been for so long discussed while inefficacious substitutes were found for it, might have lessened the extent of the penetration. But that is not proved or provable. General Ludendorff had determined to strike the blow, though he was opposed by a strong minority of the German Headquarters Staff, and having so determined he staked the German army's all upon it, and thrust his masses forward with a mastery that was not less conspicuous because in the last issue it failed.

Of Ludendorff's strategy it might be said, in parody of the comment on Balaclava, that it was magnificent but it was not war—at any rate not the war which the Germans could afford to risk. But it was the highest expression of the German "hammer blow", and no troops, and no defences, could have sustained it without giving. The British gave, but they did not break. Instead, the attack broke for ever the German power to launch such another.

Through the long, expectant winter,

activities on either side of the 400-mile front were limited to raids on a greater or smaller scale, the hundreds of smaller ones aiming at deriving information of the opponent's strength and the disposition of his units, the larger ones designed to keep the troops in battle training, or to disconcert the enemy by the seizure of useful positions. The Germans entered on the larger number of the second class of these attacks, and directed the more important of them at those points in the neighbourhood of the Cambrai sector which both before and after the decisive conflict were the keystones of either side's defence. Such were the attacks of December 12, January 5 and 8, on Bullecourt, notorious for the bloody struggles in which the Australians had been involved for its possession; at Polderhoek Château (December 14 and 22) and astride the Ypres-Staden railway, positions which were to be foci of the Germans' new attempt to strike at the Channel Ports; at Dixmude (March 6) and in the neighbourhood of Houthulst Forest and the Menin road (March 8), positions associated with the same design; and, largest of all, on the Welsh Ridge (Cambrai Front, December 30). This was a determined and carefully-concealed attack which aimed at obtaining the observation posts of the ridge, and was beaten back only at the expense of a strong counter-attack.

The raids, although prudently cut down to the least expensive dimensions by Sir Douglas Haig's commanders, nevertheless mounted up. The

British raids numbered 125, from December 8, 1917, when the first Cambrai battle died down, to the opening of the German offensive on March 21; 77 of them brought back prisoners, or information, or both. In this same period the Germans sent over 225 raids, not more than 62 of which had any success at all, while in 67 their failure was so complete as to leave prisoners in our hands. The French were more active. They had a genius for nipping the enemy at unaware moments, and at the Butte du Mesnil (February 13, 160 German prisoners), at Bures and Mencil (February 20, 525 prisoners), in the Woevre (March 4, 150 prisoners), continually gained more than they gave. The German reprisals took the form of bombing Paris. Paris exchanged places with London in susceptibility to aerial bombing.

It is not easy for anyone who surveys the operations at a distance of time to realize the sense of impending struggle which weighed on the responsible leaders in France; it was not easy for people in Great Britain to realize it even in the weeks just before the hour struck. But Sir Douglas Haig was certain of what was to come by the middle of February. Twenty-eight German divisions had come from Russia, six had returned from Italy, and, despite the strain on Germany's overtaxed rolling-stock and the system of railways she commanded, more were coming. By the end of the month German ammunition and supply dumps had sprung up like mushrooms from the sea to the Oise, and were sown thickest opposite the Third

Army at Cambrai and the Fifth Army to the south of it. Here then was the first blow to fall.

By March 21, 1918, there were 192 German divisions in the Western theatre of war ready to give the blow weight. The British Commander had prepared to meet it in the following wise:—

In the northern portion of his battle front he was unable to fall back very far. To do so would have been to uncover the Channel ports, and with the loss of these would go the whole system of communication on which, through four years of war, the British armies had learnt to depend. Any alternative system of communications, though in the last resort it might have to be adopted, would have meant so indefinite a prolongation of the war that the necessity of considering it would have been indistinguishable from the acceptance of defeat. It cannot be too strongly insisted that smooth and easy sea communications were the mainspring of the maintenance of the Entente's strength. In an ordinary year no great German offensive could have been launched in this sector because of the state of the ground, still sodden after winter rain, but in 1918 a long spell of dry weather had dried the ground in an exceptional way, and the Germans had made preparations for an attack astride the Menin road.

Next, south of this sector, was the Lens coal-field area. Ground could not be ceded here either; for its loss would open up the flanks of the coastal sector.

But south of this, as the line ap-

proached Arras and went beyond it, there was more freedom of manœuvre. Part of the ground was that already devastated by the enemy in the spring of 1917. No danger to the integrity of the British forces or their communications would arise from a reasonable withdrawal under pressure. Where, however, danger would arise would be if the enemy, striking his hardest south-east of Arras towards St. Quentin and Péronne, should drive a wedge between the British and French armies and eventually seize the great railway junction of Amiens. With the loss of Amiens would go a line of communication which fed British and French armies, even as the Great Western Railway might feed armies aligned between the Bristol Channel and the mouth of the Thames. Amiens would be Swindon. Consequently, more than half Sir Douglas Haig's troops, and all his cavalry, were allotted to this sector's defence.

Arrangements had been made, among the rest of the carefully considered plans, for mutual Franco-British co-operation, for moving up a French army from the south to the north of the Oise in case of need. Other arrangements had been made for the rapid motor and rail transport of reserve divisions to any threatened point.

Two days before "the day" the Intelligence Department were aware that the Germans were putting the final touches to their preparations, and knew that the attack would be made on March 21, if it did not come on the day before. The British preparations

were as complete as they could be made.

"The Third Army, under the command of General the Hon. Sir J. H. G. Byng, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., M.V.O., held a front of about 27 miles from north of Gouzeaucourt to south of Gavrelle with the V, IV, VI, and XVII Corps, under the respective commands of Lieut.-General Sir E. A. Fanshawe, K.C.B., Lieut.-General Sir G. M. Harper, K.C.B., D.S.O., Lieut.-General Sir J. A. L. Haldane, K.C.B., D.S.O., and Lieut.-General Sir C. Ferguson, Bt., K.C.B., K.C.M.G., M.V.O., D.S.O. The average length of front held by each division in line on the Third Army front was about 4700 yards.

"The front of the Fifth Army, at that date commanded by General Sir H. de la P. Gough, K.C.B., K.C.V.O., extended from our junction with the French just south of



Ministry of Information

Lieutenant-General Sir J. A. L. Haldane, K.C.B., commanding the 6th Corps of the Third Army
(Drawn by Francis Dodd)



Lieutenant-General Sir Ivor Maxse, K.C.B., commanding the 13th Corps, Fifth Army
(Drawn by Francis Dodd)

Barisis to north of Gouzeaucourt, a distance of about 42 miles, and was held by the III, XVIII, XIX, and VII Corps, commanded respectively by Lieut.-General Sir R. H. K. Butler, K.C.M.G., C.B., Lieut.-General Sir I. Maxse, K.C.B., C.V.O., D.S.O., Lieut.-General Sir H. E. Watts, K.C.B., C.M.G., and Lieut.-General Sir W. N. Congreve, V.C., K.C.B., M.V.O. Over 10 miles of this front between Amigny-Rouy and Alaincourt were protected by the marshes of the Oise River and Canal, and were therefore held more lightly than the remainder of the line; but on the whole front of this army the number of divisions in line only allowed of an average of one division to some 6750 yards of front."

The idea of depth in defence had become a canon of tactics, and the forces were therefore arranged with

reference to three defensive belts set at considerable distances behind one another. The first of these was an outpost screen covering the main positions. Behind the forward defences of the Fifth Army strong positions had been drawn to encircle Péronne and the crossings of the Somme, and were to be regarded as deep bridgeheads. They were nearly, but not quite, completed. Sir Douglas Haig had reason to believe that the spear-head of the German attack would be thrust between the Sensée River and the Bapaume-Cambrai road — a stretch notorious then from the name of its centre, Bullecourt, afterwards to become more famous from the breaking of the Hindenburg line here at Queant and Méuvres.

The anticipation was correct, and eighteen German divisions were sent forward along this 10-mile stretch on March 21. South of it juts out the Flesquières ridge, won in the Cambrai battle, and making a salient which, it was judged, the Germans would leave alone, preferring to outflank it. They did. Their attack was prolonged from a front south of it to beyond St. Quentin at Moy, another and longer stretch of about 28 miles, comprising Gouzeaucourt, Gonnelieu, and Le Catelet. Against this front, behind which lay Ronssoy, Roisel, Ham, and road and rail to Péronne, the Germans directed forty divisions, nearly half a million men, on the first day. The marshes south of Moy should have held up any further prolongation of this line, but the drought had made the ground so far practicable that the Germans actually used six divisions there. In

all, sixty-four German divisions were employed on the first day of this tremendous attack. Most of these divisions had spent many weeks, even months, in training for it; and in numbers alone they exceeded the



Ministry of Information

Lieutenant-General Sir C. Ferguson, Bart., K.C.B.,
commanding the 17th Corps, Third Army
(Drawn by Francis Dodd)

total fighting strength¹ of the entire British army in France.

To meet the onslaught, Byng's Third Army had eight divisions in line and seven in reserve. Gough's Fifth Army had fourteen infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions. The cavalry was in reserve, as well as three of the infantry divisions. Therefore, to meet the German drive of sixty-four

divisions, the British had nineteen infantry divisions in line, ten in reserve, and the cavalry. Later the German attack extended. It began on a front of 54 miles, which was stretched to 63, and before the end of March the Germans had put in nine more divisions. By that time it was clear that the whole German striking force had been thrown on the board, and the British reserves were hurried towards the points of greatest danger. So that the numbers of British divisions employed in the defence rose to thirty-seven (in line and reserve) by the end of March, and to forty-nine (infantry and cavalry) by the 9th of April. A most significant remark in Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch is that by the end of March, ten days after the German effort had been launched, it was broken—though fresh divisions came as fuel to the blaze for ten days longer.

One can almost picture that great 50-mile attack on the thick foggy morning of a still March day, without Sir Douglas Haig's notes on it—the furious bombardment, the deep rain of high-explosive shells, the reeking gas, the communications battered and broken far behind the lines, the enemy crowding forward, reckless of losses, and in such weight and masses that loss of direction could matter little to their general plan. But on the night of March 21, and the morning of March 22, the anxious listeners to the telegraphic messages in Great Britain could tell little or nothing of what had been done, of what had been saved.

Those who lived through those days will long remember, though they

¹ The distinction between fighting forces and total numbers of *personnel* must be kept in mind.

may recall without precision, the effect which the brief official dispatches produced on the mind. Half-forgetful of what was coming, the public was discussing Sir Eric Geddes's policy at the Admiralty, and the Lichnowsky disclosures, when, on the morning of

spoke tersely of having penetrated into portions of the English positions between Cambrai and La Fère.

The second day's report seemed to imply that the great 50-mile attack, now extended to nearly 60 miles along the downs between the Somme,



Official Photograph

Ludendorff's Offensive: a British ammunition dump, which we fired before retiring

Friday, March 22, came the first intimation that "The Offensive" had "Begun". We quote the ascription from the *Times* of that date; all knew what "the offensive" meant. "In the course of the fighting", said the telegraphic official dispatch, "the enemy broke through our outpost positions and succeeded in penetrating into our battle positions in certain parts of the front." The German official report

Scarpe, and Oise, was being firmly resisted. "Our troops are fighting with the greatest gallantry." The enemy had made some progress at certain points, and had been thrown back at others by counter-attacks. Our losses had "inevitably been considerable"; the German *communiqué* gave point to that admission by claiming 16,000 British prisoners and 200 guns. Still we appeared to be holding our own.

Then on Saturday afternoon (March 23) the eagerly awaited British *communiqué* told in terms that were brief indeed, but ominous, that the German pressure had been too great for resistance. "During the afternoon (of Friday) powerful hostile attacks, delivered with a great weight of artillery, broke through our defensive system west of St. Quentin." So our line had, in military phrase, been pierced. Our troops were falling back to prepared positions; very heavy fighting was in progress; the redeeming feature of the situation was that in the north (Cambrai sector) the line was holding, despite the fierceness of the attacks.

Sunday morning brought no better news—to a tutored ear—and Monday morning's dispatches emphasized only the desperate fighting of a retirement under compulsion, while the German dispatches, sounding an ever-rising note of exultation, claimed on Saturday 15,000 prisoners and 250 guns for Prince Rupprecht, and 10,000 prisoners and 150 guns for the Crown Prince. On Sunday the German assertions were almost lyrical in their triumph. Thirty thousand prisoners and 600 guns were counted. Ham and Péronne had fallen: "the battle between Monchy - Cambrai and Quentin - La Fère has been won. The English Third and Fourth Armies were beaten"; and others besides the Crown Princes were deemed worthy of mention: General von Below, who was fighting near Monchy; General von der Marwitz, who was following on the heels of the vanquished enemy, and had joined with von Below near

Equancourt; General von Hutier, thrusting for Péronne; minor generals, such as Von Luttwitz and Von Cettingen, who had reached the Somme; Von Webern, Von Conta, Von Gayl, who had crossed the Crozat Canal. Even the troops had done something: "the attacking spirit of the infantry could not have been exceeded; it has shown what German bravery can accomplish".

All this, together with the growing tale of men and guns lost, was not pleasant reading; and it was quite certain that the German mention of "booty in war material" was no fairy tale. The Somme had certainly been crossed by the enemy at some points south of Péronne; and for several days our own reports admitted successively the loss of part of the Somme line, the fall of Bapaume, Nesle, and Guiscard. The German captures were beyond denial increasing; there was nothing improbable in their claim of 45,000 prisoners, 600, or 900 guns; the best we could say was that we were making a good fight of it. Perhaps that was not the best. There was a heartening War Office message that "our troops, though tired, are in good heart, and are fighting splendidly". That homely reassurance perhaps was—for the British people—a sufficient rejoinder to the Kaiser's message to the Kaiserin: "By the grace of God the battle has been won." He (the Kaiser) had already named it the Kaiser's battle. So it was, but it was not won. The tide was already slackening: the Germans had pushed as far as they could.

It is time to turn from their blustering boastfulness to the detailed but

complicated account furnished by Sir Douglas Haig of a battle that never had the simplicity of lines being solidly rolled back or rolled up, but was a long and bewildering complication of attack and counter-attack, and of units, great or small, submerged, not in a tidal wave, but by a flood filtering now here, now there, through a score of channels along a front of 60 miles.

The first brunt of the attack on the morning of March 21 was borne impartially by the extremities of the wings. At the extreme south, beyond St. Quentin, the Germans broke into the front lines opposite La Fère. At the northern extremity they penetrated into the forward positions north of the Cambrai-Bapaume road, at Lagnicourt and at Bullecourt. But a more serious penetration followed between these two extremities at Ronsoy, which was situated on the second line of defence, and this infiltration was at once followed up by the enemy. By midday they had flowed over Templeux, and Villeret and Hargicourt, left behind in the flood, were automatically surrounded and captured. North of this group was Epehy; south of it was Le Verguier; and the garrisons here held on tightly—the 21st Division (Major-General Campbell) at Epehy, the 24th Division at Le Verguier. They stopped the rot; they inflicted heavy losses on the Germans from both flanks. Our Tanks were very useful. The breach here was the most serious of any till midday, for though most of the front-line positions had gone, as was to be expected, and though, both opposite the Third Army in the north and the extreme wing to the south of St.

Quentin, villages had been lost, the divisions defending them had found their bearings and were resisting desperately.

But after midday the Germans continued to push their attack with unabated energy, especially in that region south of St. Quentin where the long spell of dry weather had made his crossing of the river and canal between St. Quentin and La Fère practicable. They had first penetrated the British battle-zone between Essigny and Benay; thereafter they pressed on to the Crozat Canal and took Quessy, close to La Fère. North of this a struggle to the death was maintained by Major-General Lee's 18th Division, which, though outflanked at Quessy, as well as at Benay, fought on till night had descended; the sound of rifle-firing from its surrounded outposts was heard till midnight. But despite such resistance the Germans forced back our troops between Benay and the Somme Canal to their rear defences. But here again, in the stoical phrase of the soldier, parties of our infantry were still holding out, and units were intact east of Essigny, where the front line had been. A little farther north still, just behind St. Quentin, the 30th Division (Major-General Williams), at Roupv and Savy, more than held their own; their artillery caught the German infantry bunching, and the division thrust fiercely into them with counter-attacks. On the rest of the front the Fifth Army did not give up much, the 9th Division (Major-General Tudor) keeping or regaining most of its forward positions, Chapel Hill, north of Epehy, among them.

In the less dangerously-menaced zone of the Third Army, the Flesquières salient, which the enemy had not tried to go through, but had preferred to get round, was intact. But north of it, where one of the German flanking attacks was pushed, there was fighting of the most determined kind for Demicourt and Doignier and Beaumetz. The 51st Division (Major-General Carter - Campbell) distinguished itself here to the point of being mentioned in a *communiqué*; and this and the 19th Division (Major-General Jeffries) held up the Germans from noon to night. Farther north still, however, they could not be kept out of Lagnicourt, and at the end of the day the 34th Division (Major-General Nicholson), on one side of the Sensée River, was defending St. Leger and Croisilles, while the 3rd Division (Major-General Deverell) was holding up an attack on the other bank. Thus, in general survey of the position, the Germans had made some progress nearly all along the line of their attack, and considerable progress on the wings of the Fifth Army; but they had nowhere made a big break, and we were still fighting in our chosen battle-zone.

Nevertheless, the advances made by the Germans were such that if they were pressed, as they would be on the morrow, a number of our divisions held such ragged fronts and had themselves so inevitably suffered in the defence, that they could not be suffered to remain in positions of tactical disadvantage. Adjustments of the line were necessary, and the first withdrawal was made during the night near St. Quentin. General Gough (Fifth

Army), after consultation with Lieutenant-General Butler (3rd Corps), decided to withdraw that corps behind the St. Crozat Canal. The 36th Division, on the right of the 18th Corps (Lieutenant-General Maxse), withdrew in conformity to the Somme



Ministry of Information

Lieutenant-General Sir E. A. Fanshawe, K.C.B.,
commanding the 5th Corps, Third Army
(Drawn by Francis Dodd)

Canal. Another withdrawal was that in the Flesquières salient at the other end of the line, for, though the front was not pierced, the German advances on either side of the salient made it dangerous. The 5th Corps (Lieutenant-General Fanshawe) went back therefore to Highland Ridge, and thence westwards to Havrincourt and Hermies. Bridges were destroyed across the Somme and Crozat Canals,

often by acts of great bravery; at one bridge, where the electric connection failed, the officer in charge stepped up to the bridge and lit the instantaneous fuse.

Sir Douglas Haig was by this time aware that the blow which had been struck would be followed up with all the weight and all the perseverance the enemy could command. Ludendorff had committed his whole striking force to the battle; the British Commander had now no hesitation about summoning his own reserves and drawing on the French. The surprise was over, the expected had happened. It was the second day, however, which was to prove the hours of severest trial.

The day again broke misty; again the enemy left no part of the line quiescent; again he drove his masses forward in the teeth of short-range fire from field-guns, machine-guns, and rifles. He had least success in the north, opposite the Third Army. The British divisions holding the reduced Flesquières salient beat off attacks at Havrincourt and Villers Plouich, and these attacks cost the Germans dear. So also did those which were pressed throughout the day at Hermies and Beaumetz, the first of which was repelled by the 17th Division; and that in the neighbourhood of Beaumetz (the artillery-fire left nothing of the village) by the 51st Division, aided by a brigade of the 25th Division (Major-General Bainbridge). The 51st had now endured two days of severest fighting, and at close of day were withdrawn south of the village. The enemy

attack, spreading farther north, surged about Vaulx Wood, St. Leger, and Croisilles, and near the first of these got right through to the rear of the battle positions, but was thrown out again by infantry and Tanks. Farther north still, beyond St. Leger, he got on to the road which joins Croisilles with Henin, but the progress he made was very slow and very expensive. The British northern pivot shifted a little, but not dangerously.

But in the middle of the line the German did better; and to the south better still. At the extreme south, near La Fère, his progress was too costly and too long delayed to give him a purchase. Our outside right, to use a phrase borrowed from football, held; it was our inside right which ultimately gave way. On the outside right the German goal was the Crozat Canal. The troops of Von Webern and Von Conta brought up trench mortars, machine-guns, and rafts—and before the day was ended were aided by other troops under Von Gayl—to force the passage of the canal. They got across at Quessy an hour after midday, but it was not till evening that they were able to seize the more decisive crossing at Tergniér against the stout resistance of the 58th Division (Major-General Catar). Some German detachments had forced a passage at La Montagne Jussy, farther north, in the afternoon, but they were flung back into the canal by the 18th Division and the 2nd Cavalry Division (Major-General Pitman). The extreme southern pivot, like that of the north, was doing what was expected of it.

In the middle of the line things went better for the Germans. Von Marwitz's divisions strove to develop the dent they had made on the first day of the attack opposite Le Catelet. They took St. Emilie, near Ronssoy, early in the morning; took Hervilly also, farther south, though they lost it again to the 1st Cavalry Division (Major-General Mullens), and were held up about Roisel by the 66th Division (Major-General Malcolm). But north and south of this they flowed round; Le Verguier, to the south, was the first to sink beneath the flood, and when St. Emilie had gone, Epehy, to the north, was threatened from behind, and so was Roisel. So these sinking strongholds had to be abandoned too, and, fighting heavily as they retired, the British troops fell back to the south on the third line of defence between Bernes and Boucly, where the 50th Division (Brigadier-General Stockley) was already in position, and to the north the 9th and 21st Divisions retired to the line Nurlu - Equancourt on the Péronne-Cambrai road.

But this weakening reacted on the positions farther south, the British right centre and inside-right wing, and the German general, Von Hutier, was quick to see it. The fall of La Verguier left the Fifth Army's centre with a weak flank, and the German divisions, spreading out from Maissemy, concentrated on it. The British troops holding Holnon Wood, between Le Verguier and St. Quentin, were unable to hold up the rush, and streamed back out of their battle positions through the 20th Division

(Major-General W. D. Smith). The 50th Division was thus unable to keep its place, and fell back fighting fiercely and continuously from the whole of the battle positions of this front till it could form a new line with the 20th Division between Boucly and Villeveque and Happencourt, on the upper Crozat Canal. It was a retirement relieved by great gallantry, and Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch singles out the 1st Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (36th Division) for mention. This battalion held a redoubt in the forward zone at Fontaines-Clercs on the upper Crozat Canal throughout the whole of the first day's fighting, and on the second perilous day, after the troops on their right had withdrawn in accordance with orders, maintained their position though surrounded. After an unrelenting fight, the officer commanding sent back a small party, who succeeded in getting through to our lines; he and the rest continued to fight till the end.

At half-past five the Germans were up to the third line of defence, where the 50th Division were holding it, and were attacking with all the momentum left to them. The 50th Division, holding much too long a line, Boucly and Villeveque (6 miles), did their best and checked the onrush. But they could not stay it altogether. About Poeuilly they were forced back, and the Germans, ever extending along the bed of the Omignon River, opened up a gap between the 50th's right flank and the troops of the 61st (Major-General Mackenzie), the 20th continuing the line. Through this

gap during the evening strong and fresh bodies of Germans poured, and broke through the third defensive zone about Beauvois and Vaux. This was the "break-through", which was the first step in turning our defence, till then on the whole successful, into a reverse. Practically all the reserves which could reach the spot had been thrown in; there was nothing for it but a retreat at this break to the Somme.

The decision was at once taken, and at once put into effect. General Gough ordered the 18th Corps (Lieutenant-General Maxse) to fall back during the night behind the Somme south of Voyennes, in touch with the 3rd Corps (Lieutenant-General Butler) on their right, while north of these the 19th Corps (Lieutenant-General Watts) and 7th Corps (Lieutenant-General Congreve) were to try to hold the bridgehead about Péronne along the line drawn in a north-easterly direction through Croix, Maignaux, Monchy-Lagache, Vraignes, and thence northward along our third line of defence to a junction with the Third Army about Equancourt. It was not an easy withdrawal; the 20th, 50th, and 39th (Major-General Feltham) were followed up all the way by attacking Germans.

This withdrawal necessitated others. The Third Army evacuated still more of the Flesquières salient, and its right came back to Metz, Equancourt, and higher up other portions of the Third Army retired to new battle positions between Henin-sur-Cojeul and Fampoux. The whole line was falling back and the Germans were following it up, fighting

through the night. The pressure found a new gap towards morning about Mory, which was in the northern sector (about 16 miles due west of Cambrai). It was clear that the first piercing of the lines about St. Quentin was carrying far-reaching effects into it, and that the retirement already ordered was not nearly drastic enough. The Crozat Canal had gone, the right centre of the Fifth Army had gone, and the Air Service reported that the German front for miles back was packed with advancing troops. General Gough concluded that he dare not expose his hard-trying troops to an immediate battle on his new Somme positions, for, if he failed to hold the Germans till reinforcements arrived, defeat would herald disaster. He elected for a further retreat, which would involve the abandonment of Péronne. No one on the evidence available can say that General Gough was wrong. He had a choice of two evils and elected for the lesser one, which would involve much loss of material, of guns, and of men who now were being hustled in retreat, but, at any rate, would avert a break-through on a disastrous scale. The 19th Corps came back to the Somme, the 7th temporarily covered Péronne on the line Doingt-Nurlu.

It now became the enemy's game to substitute for a break-through the enlargement of the salient they were creating. Their attacks were consequently contemporaneously pressed on the south of the bulge, where the Crozat Canal forms a big letter <. They crossed anew both legs of it and increased their holdings on the

western bank, despite counter-attacks by British and French infantry and Canadian cavalry. Fierce confused fighting took place on the wooded hills on the hither side of the canal between Faillouel and Noreuil, but more and more German troops pressed on over hard-won crossings at Jussy and Menessis. March 23 was a day marked out for further withdrawals. The situation north of the St. Crozat Canal nowhere showed signs of early improvement.

In the night preceding the 23rd the hurried withdrawal to the Somme, on which General Gough decided, had left a gap near Ham. The Germans seized on it and entered the town in the early morning, and, exploiting their success according to German tactics, crossed the Somme here and hereabouts, where the bridges had not been destroyed. These forces, though supplemented, were temporarily thrown back again by the 20th and 61st Divisions just below Ham, and at Ollezy, as much as 3 miles east of the town, the 36th Division (Major-General Nugent) held on till late in the day. But it could not be held permanently; nor could Brouchy and Aubigny, north and south of Ham, which was clearly doomed. Farther north the troops had been safely got over to the west bank of the river, finely covered by the 50th Division, and most of the bridges had been destroyed by the untiring devotion of the Royal Engineers; and, taken altogether, the situation on the Somme between Ham and Péronne was, during most of the 23rd, reassuring enough to satisfy General

Gough that he had done the right thing in his withdrawal.

But now a new danger appeared at the junction of the Fifth and Third Armies. The enemy had not been too preoccupied with his efforts between Ham and Péronne to neglect the northern portion of the British front. He had struck hard at the forces withdrawing to the line of the ridge between Equancourt and Nurlu, as well as 10 miles farther north, at Le Bucquiere, Beugny and Mory. Beugny is identified with the 9th Battalion Welsh Regiment (19th Division), which, holding on till dusk, enabled other battalions to withdraw from an apparently hopeless position. At Vault, north of this, the 124th Brigade (41st Division, Major-General Lawford) beat off six attacks; at Mory the 40th Division (Major-General Ponsonby) won back the village, and at St. Leger, the 31st Division (Major-General Bridgford) drove off two German divisions. Bonny fighting! If at the junction of the Third and Fifth Armies things had gone as well! The divisions of the 5th Corps (Lieutenant General Fanshawe), covered by hard-pressed rear-guards, had continued their retreat from Metz-en-Couture (near Gouzeaucourt) across the Canal du Nord to the third positions about Ytres.

Simultaneously the adjacent 7th Corps (Lieutenant-General Congreve) should have been retreating parallel from the Nurlu positions to the Canal du Nord. But the movement left a gap between the two corps into which the Germans rapidly pushed, despite all the efforts of the 47th

Division (Major-General Gorringe), and Pereira's Brigade (2nd Division) to close it, and it became wider. The 5th Corps was hustled back past their chosen alignment and were at nightfall fighting in the open about Rocquigny; and the 7th Corps, heavily battered all the afternoon, were still seeking

Ytres the northern pivot had held and was swinging back only very slowly, like the upper length of a pendulum; it was the lower length which was being pushed back farther and faster, and the greatest danger was that it should be whirled back so as to snap the rod and thus make a break between



Within Range of the German Guns: a street in Amiens

Official Photograph

to keep their footing on the wrong side of the Tortille River about Bouchavesnes and Sailly-Saillisel, on the road from Bapaume to Péronne.

The line was now west of Péronne; it was clear that it would have to go back a good deal farther. South of Ytres, divisions and brigades had lost touch in their frequent withdrawals, and the German flood was seeking the interstices. The best feature of the situation was that from Monchy to

the British and French armies. Hitherto the breaks had been only between divisions of the British army.

On the afternoon of this critical day of March 23, General Haig had another meeting with General Foch, and the French Commander-in-Chief made arrangements for the French to take over as quickly as possible that section of the British Fifth Army south of Péronne, where the British were weakest and the pendulum was

swinging fastest. We may perhaps assume that, despite the further pains and penalties of the retreat, the most dangerous moments had passed by the night of March 23-24, and that further apprehension was concerned only with the fine in men, guns, and material which the Germans could exact. The task for the British and French Commands was to cut their own losses and so to increase the cost to the Germans of their advance as to bring them to a standstill. It was not till April that General Foch permitted himself to say that Amiens and the Franco-British junction were safe; but, except for the unforeseen occurrences of war, the assertion might have been justified within the few days following the meeting of the two commanders.

Yet the fighting on the morn of the 24th cannot be said to have gone in our favour. The Germans began early to press past the Ytres zone, and the Canal du Nord, Bus, Lechelle, Saily-Saillisel, Rancourt, and Clery, strung north to south on a 10-mile line, were entered by them. It became necessary, therefore, to take back gradually the right wing of the Third Army from the line in front of Bapaume. North of that our troops stubbornly held their positions, the Guards Division (Major-General Fielding) and the 3rd and 31st Divisions beating off a number of attacks. The German advance at the junction of the Third and Fifth Armies was not made without paying a heavy price, the retreating divisions continually turning on the enemy and fiercely fighting for time. The 17th Division, for example, drove off four attacks at Barastre; the 47th

Division held Rocquigny from sunrise till late afternoon, when the Germans, working round their flank into Le Transloy, compelled their retirement.

It was south of this that the gaping breach made the German advance swifter, and caused us most damage. Part of the South African Brigade (9th Division) was surrounded at Marrières Wood, just north of Clery. They fought till less than a hundred unwounded men were left, and all their ammunition was spent. More menacing than this isolated loss was the threat of a German wedge between the Third and Fifth Armies at Lesbœufs and Combles, both two miles west of the Péronne-Bapaume road. By the Commander-in-Chief's admission the situation was temporarily serious; it was averted only by swiftly withdrawing the more northerly situated 4th Corps to the line Ervillers-Grevillers, behind Bapaume, and the 5th Corps towards Le Sars, also behind Bapaume, on the road to Albert. Meanwhile reinforcements were being deflected to this area as fast as they could be marched. The 35th Division (Major General Franks) and all the troops that could be quickly swept up from the Albert area were hurried off from the Somme to support the 7th Corps behind Clery and Combles. The enemy had already pressed through Clery, hard on the heels of the sorely tried 9th and 21st Divisions, when these mixed reinforcements came into action. The 15th Battalion Cheshire Regiment and the 15th Battalion Notts and Derby Regiment, of Franks' Division, at once loosed themselves at the Germans and held them up. The

check enabled a new line to be taken up and held from the Somme to Longueval. Another danger-point was passed.

Nevertheless, the retreat was harassed on its whole 20-mile front from the Somme to Ervillers, and not least at those points near Lesboeufs and Morval, where the enemy had worked round the retiring divisions, and were here and there between the British troops and the points to which they had to fall back. Sir Douglas Haig selects for mention the action of twelve machine-guns of the 63rd Division, which fired 25,000 rounds into the German masses deploying from Morval, and enabled the division to reach its assigned positions. By night-fall the 4th Corps had reached its goal between Ervillers and Le Barque, and the 5th Corps prolonged the line between Ligny, Thillois, and farther south, though touch between the two corps was not of a perfect kind.

While this had been going on in the north of the bulge, the Germans were trying hard to improve their positions south of Péronne, where the Somme makes a right-angled turn, and their attempts to cross the river at many points were favoured by the unusually low state of the river and the dryness of the marshes. They made by no means a complete job of it. Their forces, which had crossed at night and at dawn at St. Christ and Bethencourt, were driven back again by troops of the 20th Division and the 8th Division (Major-General Heneker), but in between these points they crossed at Pargny and remained there, thus impeding communication between the

two British divisions, and threatening to sever them. This threat increased during the day, the Germans contemporaneously seeking for other crossings, especially near Ham. The attack at Ham was long held up, fine work being done by the 1/5th (Pioneer) Battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, but it was not possible in the circumstances to fight more than delaying actions, so that the enlarging bridge-head at Pargny, coupled with the pressure from Ham, compelled a retreat behind Morchain on the one hand and the Libermont Canal on the other. It is to be noted that the steps of retreat were more considerable here than farther north.

Lastly (March 23-24), in the extreme southern area, between the Somme and the Oise, the Germans made another strong attempt, thrust forward, regardless of cost, through the fog of the low-lying land, to break the La Fère pivot. The dimensions of their attack were such as to enable them to flow round the flanks of the 20th and 36th Divisions at Eaucourt and Cugny, and these divisions had no option but to fall back to Villeselve, with a prospect of further retreat to Guiscard and still farther back. The cavalry, which in this open warfare was proving its long-predicted value, though its powers could be exercised only defensively, helped the retreat by a brilliant charge at Cugny, where a squadron of the 6th Cavalry Brigade broke through the German line, sabring many of the enemy and returning with 100 prisoners. Both mounted and dismounted units of the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions (Major-General

Harman) did most gallant work in support of our own and the French infantry, and so urgent was the demand for more mounted men that several regiments of dismounted Yeomanry were re-mounted, and did excellent service. Without these horsemen, "skilfully handled and gallantly led"

Chauny. In the course of the night French and British troops were aligned afresh on a new line farther west, covering Noyon and going thence northward to Guiscard and Libermont.

During that night also the Germans kept up attacks which had abated



Official Photograph

Brothers-in-arms in the March Campaign of 1918: British and French soldiers in action alongside one another

—the phrase is Sir Douglas Haig's—our thinly-held lines could hardly have held out in that broken and wooded country till the French reinforcements arrived. These were coming up fast, but the British troops had still farther to fall back to permit a rapid junction. Consequently the 3rd Corps (British), which on this day became part of the Third French Army, yielding slowly and stubbornly to pressure, gave up

nothing of their determination to make a break on the northern front above Bapaume at Sapignies, and at dawn extended the attack between there and Ervillers, also on the Bapaume-Arras road. This attack was met and countered by the 42nd Division (Major Solly Flood), which threw the Germans once again out of Sapignies and held the line till mid-day. The Germans, strongly rein-

forced, then came back again to the assault, and pressed back those divisions of the 4th Corps, which were not properly in touch with the 5th Corps on their right, so that we lost Grevillers, just to the east of Bapaume, and Bihucourt. But to the end of the day Ervillers remained ours, and here the 1/10th Battalion Manchester Regiment (42nd Division) had then beaten off eight assaults. Our resistance was equally sound on the north bank of the Somme, where our troops had established on the previous day the line from Ham upwards towards Longueval. Here we took prisoners from five German divisions.

The rub eventually came at the old unclosed gap between the 4th and 5th Corps, and became first perceptible between Grevillers and Montauban, where the divisions had not settled down on the line they had sought the day before. They beat off a number of assaults, the 63rd Division (Major-General Lawrie) doing particularly well, but in the late afternoon began to fall back individually towards the Ancre, thus further widening the gap. When the enemy, pressing through it, reached Courcellette and extended the thrust towards Pys and Irles, it became clear that the flank of the 4th Corps at Grevillers was in a perilous position, and that the Third Army, of which it was a part, must swing back its line still farther. Its centre would all have to go back to the Ancre. Some of our troops were across already at Beaucourt, north-west of Thiepval; and by nightfall some pushing German patrols had got to Miramont, 3 miles higher up the river.

They threatened thus to get on to Serre and Puisieux and drive a wedge, thin, perhaps, but long and dangerous, between the 4th and 5th Corps.

There was nothing for it but for the 4th Corps "to refuse its flank" by retreating farther. Another stage



General Sir H. S. Horne, commanding the First
British Army
(From a photograph by Swaine)

backwards to Bucquoy-Ablainzeville was the consequence; and here the 4th Corps found touch with the 6th Corps about Boyelles, reaching there almost the limits of the retreat. The other divisions of the Third Army, which had now charge of all divisions north of the Somme, were brought back to a line joining Bray on the Somme to Albert. There was still an awkward gap about Serre, but the Third Army had now almost secured its foothold. The reinforcements from

the armies of Plumer and Horne were fast coming up; and the Germans were becoming winded. They were crossing the old no-man's-land of the Somme battle-field, and felt its effects.

But stability, even of this comparative kind, was still far off south of the Somme. Most of the defensive line along the Somme River and Canal had gone, and what was left was endangered by the withdrawal of the divisions north of the Somme to a point as far back as Bray. All the local reserves had been thrown in; there were no more British reinforcements at hand; and the only break in the sky was that with the assumption by the French Commander-in-Chief of responsibility for this area, his reinforcements were being hurried up as fast as possible. Nevertheless, every mile we went back increased the bulge against us, and gave us a longer line to defend. The Germans had got Guiscard in the night, and at dawn of March 25 were battering away on the Franco-British positions of the heights of Noyon, where the Canal du Nord reaches down to the Oise. The Allied batteries on the east side of the canal could not be left there; they had to be taken over, and the Canadian cavalry, dismounting, enabled this to be done in safety. A dashing counter-attack by the 18th Division got back a neighbouring village and captured prisoners, and the French Tanks did their share in disorganizing the oncoming enemy, who were now spreading down from Guiscard. But, as Noyon was now gone, the forces which had fought there and thereabouts were withdrawn across the

Oise, and on the morning of the 26th the 3rd British Corps, which had fought so hard, handed over its duties there to the French Third Army, and was gradually moved away northwards to strengthen the 5th Corps.

Meanwhile the Fifth Army was experiencing about Nesle, 12 miles to the north, where the Canal du Nord and the Libermont Canal go towards the Somme, a repetition of its wearing task of an unintermitted fighting retreat. In the north, at Licourt, above Chaulnes, the Germans had widened the gap between the 18th and 19th Corps and entered Nesle; to the south they had crossed the Libermont Canal. The 19th Corps was forced back on Chaulnes; and though part of the line of the canal was held, it certainly could not be held safely. So as night came on the corps was withdrawn as well as could be to a new 10-mile line well behind Chaulnes, taking up positions between Hattencourt and Estrees. It was a considerable step back, and another difficulty remained, for at Liancourt Wood, on the Chaulnes-Roye road, there was a gap, which the Germans were exploring, between the 18th and 19th Corps. It was closed in a hasty and most heroic manner. The 61st Brigade (20th Division), though it had only 450 rifles left, was brought up in motor 'buses from where it had been fighting farther south, and held up the enemy till the rest of its division could withdraw through Roye.

This was the prelude to one of the most desperate expedients of the five days' fighting. The troops holding the British lines south of the Somme

were nearing the last stage of exhaustion, less in physical energy than in diminishing numbers. The fighting had been terribly exacting; the reserves had all but gone; there were no more to throw in. General Gough, one may well believe, was at his wit's end, and a suggestion made by General Grant, the Chief Engineer to the Fifth Army, was accepted because there was no other course to take. There must be some sort of reserves: General Grant organized them out of a mixture of stragglers, details, army schools *personnel*, tunnelling companies, field-survey companies, Canadian and American engineers, and posted them according to General Gough's instructions on the line of the old Amiens defences, between Mèzières, Marcelcave, and Hamel (March 26). Grant, who could ill be spared, subsequently handed over the command to General Carey, and Carey's force, the Fifth Army's "last copper", was the last line of defence. Behind it was Amiens; in front of it a line worn so thin that General Gough did not believe that the Hat encout-Frise position, taken up the day before, could be maintained if it were seriously assaulted. He had indeed given orders at night (March 25) that if the Germans did continue to attack in strength the divisions should fall back to the rearward line, Le Quesnel-Rosières-Proyart, which was roughly parallel to General Carey's line, and 5 miles in front of it. Proyart is not far from Bray on the Somme, where the Third Army's wing was.

On the morning of the 26th the Germans began spreading out from

Nesle, thrusting down towards Roye in the double hope of getting in between the British divisions and the French army, and, if they could get as far as the junction of Montdidier, on the main road from Roye, of disorganizing the French detrainning arrangements. At the same time they attacked Hattencourt, and over a considerable length of the line we held north of it, as far as the road leading due east and west from Amiens to St. Quentin. Our divisions slowly withdrew, fighting, to the line which General Gough had chosen, and being stopped there. But this retreat laid an obligation on the French troops to fall back in conformity, and in this delicate operation a gap opened between the Allies such as the Germans were not likely to miss. The French, finding German troops passing beyond their northern wing, were forced back beyond Roye, and the gap became dangerous. To fill it the wearied 36th and 30th Divisions, which on the day before had been withdrawn to rest, were put once again into the battle. They had to fight hard almost at once, but the 36th Division stuck it out at Andechy, in the middle of the gap, though the Germans had passed behind them and seized Erches, farther east. But the 36th Division was the snag in the flowing stream, and by remaining at Andechy till the afternoon of March 27, more than twenty-four hours, they just kept the Germans from getting in between the British and French armies.

Not far from here, at Le Quesnoy, a detachment numbering about 100 men and officers all told (61st Brigade,

20th Division), performed a feat which might have been made the legend of another Thermopylæ. They were told off to cover the retreat of their brigade, and did it. They kept the pass from early morning till night, and then—eleven survivors—withdrew under orders, their task accomplished, and the long day done.

At the end of that day—perhaps it may be called the last day of the danger-points—the British forces had been thrust back west of Roye farther than they had meant to go, but, south of the Somme, British and French were in touch, and the German's chance of separating the armies of the Allies had gone. A Franco-British line, drawn temporarily in an arc in front of General Gough's positions, was taken up. It ran through Guerbigny, Rouvroy, and Proyart. On this day,¹ too, the command of the Allied armies passed into the hands of General Foch as Generalissimo, and thenceforwards he assumed control and supreme responsibility.

Seeing that there had been complete understanding between the British and the French Commanders-in-Chief during the preceding five days, and that no measures taken by either could have diverted the German blow or mitigated its force, the appointment of General Foch to supreme direction is rather to be regarded as marking a new stage in the operations than as closing the old one. There were many anxious days to come, but already the worst was over. This is manifested by Sir Douglas Haig's descrip-

tion of affairs north of the Somme on March 26, where, though the enemy's effort was not spent, nor his troops incapable of powerful attacks, the stage of equilibrium was approaching.

In the morning the British troops continued to take up the Ancre line without much interference, though the gap between the 4th and 5th Corps was not yet closed near Beaumont Hamel and Puisieux, and still offered opportunity for German enterprise. The Germans perceived it, and some of their well-handled machine-guns pushed forward into the gap; but the attempt was not remunerative, for they were roughly flung back by New Zealanders (Major-General Sir A. H. Russell), who retook a village temporarily lost, while a brigade of the 4th Australian Division (Major-General Sinclair MacLagan), filled the gap between Hebuterne and Bucquoy.

This engagement was otherwise notable for the first appearance of our "whippet" Tanks. The lower part of their line north of the Somme, namely, Albert to Bray, had also been successfully taken up, and an attack made at Meaulte, near Albert, was driven off by the 9th Division. But there was a singular misunderstanding on the part of a local commander, which cost us Albert and involved the Higher Command in further difficulties. The local commander mistakenly supposed that the Albert-Bray line was a temporary one on the way to the Ancre, and placidly withdrew. When Head-quarters found out what had been done they could not put the line back again, and thus, while the Third Army's right wing had gone

¹ March 27; it had been approved by the Allied Governments on March 26.

back along the Somme about as far as Sailly-le-Sec, the left wing of the Fifth Army was still resting on Proyart, about 5 miles away, on the other bank of the Somme. A small force was sent up to hold the crossings of this 5 miles of uncovered river, but we were to feel the effects of the blunder next day.

efforts made to test our positions from Bucquoy northwards. The Germans gained portions of the villages of Ablainzeville and Alette in our forward position, but elsewhere were made to pay a high price in costly repulses inflicted by the Guards Division and the 42nd and 62nd



The New British Tanks: a "Whippet" crossing a trench

New Zealand Official Photograph

Albert itself had been entered by the Germans in the night (26th-27th), but that was no great matter, except on sentimental grounds, because we held the high ground west of the Ancre River, and were able not merely to resist attempts to drive us thence, but to punish heavily the enemy whenever they attempted to debouch from the town. North of Albert, along our chosen line, we were also equal to the very strong

Divisions. On this front as a whole the integral British positions were maintained, and prisoners and machine-guns were captured. But south of the Somme the blunder of the retirement from the line Albert-Bray put both the British and the French in a very uncomfortable position. The line as it had been intended that it should be drawn, in the arc Albert-Bray (Somme) - Proyart - Rosières - Le Quesnel, would have protected

Amiens from any effective bombardment, and orders had been given that it should be held by tooth and nail. These orders were obeyed while obedience was feasible, but the cost to wearied divisions and hard-trying men was heavy.

No praise for what they did can be too high—the words are not ours, but those of their Commander-in-Chief. South of the Somme the 8th Division at Rosières began the day (27th) by repulsing a heavy attack, which the enemy made simultaneously there and at Proyart. But the Proyart troops were set an impossible task, for, besides being assailed in front, they were taken in flank and rear by Germans whom the retirement of the commander at Bray had let up along the river. Bodies of these Germans had crossed, and began to cross in greater numbers, as far behind our Proyart troops as Cerisy. There was nothing for these unfortunate troops but to get out of this predicament as well and as fast as they could, for the Germans rapidly seized Morcourt, in the British rear, and Proyart, which could no longer be held. The Germans' next move was to try to cut them off. The seriousness of the situation may be gauged from the fact that there were no reserve reinforcements between the Proyart, Rosières, and Le Quesnel line and Amiens, except that mixed force of pioneers, railwaymen, and what not, which, under General Carey, had been told off to hold the line Hamel, Marcelcave, and Mezières—if they could. Naturally it had been hoped, and expected, that they would not be

called upon to do so, but on the morning of the 27th it looked very much as if they would be called upon to die in the last ditch.

However, as Marshal Foch's saying has it, a battle is never lost if you refuse to believe that it is, and the British soldier pulled this one out of the fire for the commanders. Part of the 1st Cavalry Division was hurried across the Somme from the north, and retook a village near Morcourt. A counter-attack by mixed forces culled from two divisions (50th and 8th), and having as its staple the 2nd Battalion Devonshire Regiment and the 22nd (Pioneer) Battalion Durham Light Infantry, stopped the Germans south-west of Proyart. The 66th Division followed up the work of the cavalry, and by nightfall we were still holding on to a stretch of the advanced positions about Harbonnières, which is between Rosières and the lost village of Proyart. Rosières was stoutly held all day by the 8th Division (from which the Devons and the Durhams had been spared), and south of Rosières a 6-mile front had been solidly held by troops of the 24th, 30th, and 20th Divisions, though these saw their flank threatened by Germans who passed south of them, and, crossing the Avre at Davencourt, took Montdidier.

Morning light dawned on an unimproved situation (28th). The enemy, in the night, had infiltrated from Morcourt and Cerisy till they stood on that main road which is drawn east and west as straight as a rule between Amiens and St. Quentin; and those

of our troops which found the Germans between them and Amiens were in a position that had no compensations, and dispiriting prospects. They were ordered to fall back, not eastwards, but south-westwards, from Harbonnières, Rosières, &c., till they stood on a line between Vrely (south-east) and Marcelcave (north-west), where



Brigadier-General Sandeman Carey, whose mixed force was the Fifth Army's Last Line of Defence

stood part of Carey's forlorn hope. But at Vrely the position was bad, and so it was farther south at Arvillers, which the Germans had outflanked on either side. They had pushed our French allies back at Hangest, north-west of it, and were curling round below it along the valley of the Avre till they had forced us out of Contoire, just on the road that leads from Amiens to Montdidier. The 61st Division made a great attempt to take

off the pressure by a counter-attack, but it did not succeed in relieving the situation very much, and the wearied troops from the Marcelcave-Vrely line fell back through the 20th Division on to Carey's lines.

Two events intervene here, the first—on which no comment is necessary—the appointment of Sir H. Rawlinson and his Staff of the Fourth Army to the direction of the further operations of the Fifth Army south of the Somme; and the ponderous German blow at Arras, to which further reference must be made. For the sake of the narrative's continuity, the movements of the forces between the River Luce and the the River Avre must be followed. The enemy made no great attack in force here; but they could, and did, find the men for local attacks, which succeeded because we were unable to reinforce our desperately-wearied troops. Our efforts here were not to win positions but to get our men out as cheaply as possible.

Pending his reinforcements, which were coming up, Carey's force was the barrier which held the defences of Amiens, and earned by its astounding fight a special tribute from Mr. Lloyd George in the House of Commons. It was aided by the cavalry division to the north, and such remnant divisions of the Fifth Army as had not yet been able to extricate themselves. The German local attacks began again on March 29, extending from Demuin, about the middle of Carey's line, southwards. The French in Mezières were forced out, and the Germans got a footing in Moreuil Wood, bordering the River Avre, by

night. The 3rd Canadian Cavalry Brigade had the Germans out of the wood again next morning; but meanwhile they had got into Demuin, on the Luce. They also made some progress north of that little stream; but then their bolt was shot. The 66th Division and the 3rd Australian Division (Major-General Monash) came on the scene and put the Germans back as far as Aubercourt, a mile from Demuin; and at night the 20th and 50th Divisions put things equally right on the south of the Luce.

Up towards the Somme a very mixed force of the 1st Cavalry, part of the 3rd Australian Division, and a battalion of U.S. Engineers had matters very much to their liking in dealing with a German attack which failed. Next day the fighting went on; the Germans still were urged forward in the hope of finding the breaking-point either of our troops or those of the French reinforcements, but the ground they won was taken away by the 8th Division; and on the day after that this division gained yet more ground. On April 2, for the first time, no German attack was made, and only one more was to be made.

If, however, the German cannon-fodder was running short south of the Somme, there was a reason for it. Too much had been expended on a most expensive failure north of the extreme northerly point which the great attack had covered. Ludendorff had made his final attempt to break the northern pivot in a new attack which extended from Puisieux to the valley of the Scarpe, and this attack, designed to get through the Arras

front, was broken against the resistance of soldiers who were supported by the traditions of Vimy Ridge. The greatest weight of the attack was directed (on March 28) on either side of the valley of the Scarpe, extending northwards so as to impinge on the right of the First Army, where Lieutenant-General Lisle's 13th Corps held the ground. The assault began with the conventional violent bombardment, followed by the infantry in force and in continual waves. Along the north bank of the Scarpe three divisions were employed, with the fresh two already there relegated to the position of reserves. Between them and their ambitious objective of the Vimy-Bailleul line were two British divisions—the 4th (Major-General Matheson) and the 56th (Major-General Dudgeon). When these had been swept away, Ludendorff proposed to send forward three special assault divisions to carry the Vimy Ridge next day.

South of the Scarpe the plan was no less ambitious. Two German divisions were to take Arras and its heights, two others were to support the attack. This assault fell on the 3rd Division and the 15th Division (Major-General Reed, V.C.), and, to hinder reinforcements being sent to the assaulted points, eleven other German divisions were sent forward to attack the whole of our line as far as Bucquoy, with local attacks still farther south.

There was one thing which distinguished this attack from the more widely-distributed heavy attacks of March 21–22; but it was a distinction

fatal to the Germans—there was no fog. In consequence, our artillery and machine-guns were able to get to work. They did the work. At Roeux, north of the Scarpe, guns opened from hidden positions at point-blank range on German infantrymen packed shoulder to shoulder in a massed advance that was renewed six times. Along the whole front our guns and machine-guns were given an opportunity that

their own artillery had made in it, but who, after bursting through, were raked flank and rear by the machine-guns of our unsilenced outposts, and were met at the same time in front by an accurate and sustained fire from our unshaken battle-lines.

The whole assault collapsed; the remnants of the slaughtered German shock battalions crept back to their lines. A second attack was sent for-



Commonwealth Troops on the Western Front: Australian heavy battery in action

was like an artilleryman's dream in its ideal of targets, both when the enemy were assembling and advancing. The German infantry, many times in this terrible war, showed how the discipline in which they had been trained enabled them to stand punishment; no more cruel example of it was furnished than in the way they advanced in front of Arras on this day. Sir Douglas Haig pays a tribute to the courage of this devoted German infantry who, in spite of the withering blast of fire, sought to cut their way by hand through our barbed wire, and to enlarge the gaps

ward in the afternoon, when the Germans could be rallied, and another bombardment could be prepared; but it met with like failure. We were able at the end of the day to link up a new outpost line in front of our battle positions. The old outposts, whose courage had contributed so much to the break-up of the attack, had fought their way back to us. A party of the 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, which had been cut off at Roeux, held out there till we could withdraw at night.

South of the Scarpe, where the

enemy may have expected less, but where they had employed greater numbers, their defeat was as complete and more costly because of its greater width of front. The Guards Division and the 31st Division stalled off the attacks that the Germans made in a day of failures; the 42nd Division dealt faithfully with the two attacks made from Ablainzeville, and the 62nd Division, with a brigade of the 4th Australian Division, beat off a succession of heavy attacks made just below here about Bucquoy. The German attack thinned out south of this, but about Hebuterne we took prisoners. The measure of our success on this day, however, was not the number of German prisoners, but the number of German dead. Another measure can be applied to it. The Germans had done their best and their worst. Their last effort to administer a knock-out blow had failed entirely, and, in the language of the Ring, they had not a punch left. Their incapacity to take advantage of our weakness south of the Somme has already been described; they made no further attack in force till April 4 and 5, when their effort to prevent the French and British line from establishing itself in its positions ended in another failure, and cost them more than they could afford.

The British line was adjusted north of the Scarpe to conform to the positions farther south; at Hebuterne, the New Zealanders improved our positions, taking at the same time a large proportion of machine-guns from the enemy; and the 32nd Division (Major-General Shute) performed the

same task at Alette. We were now beginning to take prisoners in local fighting; our reinforcements were coming up; and it must be supposed that the attempts made by the Germans on April 4 and 5 were gambling transactions made without proper enquiry of the odds. The principal attack of April 4 was made south of the Somme, from Hamel to Hangard; and was creditable to the enemy's staff arrangements, for it disclosed the arrival of sufficient German reinforcements to attack in dense formation. But though their masses caused a slight withdrawal near Hangard, the ground gained was entirely disproportionate to the loss which our artillery and machine-guns inflicted on the faltering German infantry. The artillery of the 3rd Australian Division, firing with open sights across the Somme, was specially disorganizing to the attack. The French fell back a little on both sides of the Avre; and that was all that was gained by the Germans on that day. The next day they had yet one more try, chiefly north of the Somme, though another minor attempt was made at the Somme and at Hangard south of it. The sole appreciable German gain was part of the village of Bucquoy. Elsewhere the enemy's troops, held or driven back, demonstrated even to the most ruthless German commander that the eleventh-hour attempt to get through to Amiens had failed, and would never now succeed.

The German drive had been stopped; it had been stopped at great sacrifice, and at great cost of reserves. In any examination of the causes of these

circumstances, opinion must defer to the reasons which Sir Douglas Haig assigns for them. The first of these is that the Fifth Army was not strong enough for the task which it was set; the second, that its prepared defences were also insufficient; the third, that the Germans were aided by the fog; the fourth, that, owing to previous drought, the valleys of the Oise and the Somme became unexpectedly passable for the attacking Germans; and the fifth, that, owing to the massing of the Germans on the Rheims front, as well as on the Amiens front, it was not possible to determine at the first onset whether the attack was a feint or the real thing, and consequently whether French reinforcements should, or should not, be immediately diverted to the attacked area.

To these reasons we may add another, which, though apparently the converse of Sir Douglas Haig's proposition that the Fifth Army was too weak, is, in fact, a different reason. It is that the Germans were too strong. They had the numbers, the artillery, extremely fine staff work, and—the initiative. These factors it was which enabled them to take advantage of the fog, to extend and to continue their attacks. They fought us till we could barely stand up against them, and in those moments of strain our staff work failed us, as is quite evident to anyone who follows Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch and reflects on the causes for the gaps between armies, corps, and divisions; and for the premature withdrawal from the Albert-Bray line. But though both combatants were reeling at the end, it was

the British soldier who pulled himself together, and it was the German who was unable to put in the finishing blow.

Part II.—The Northern Assault for the Channel Ports

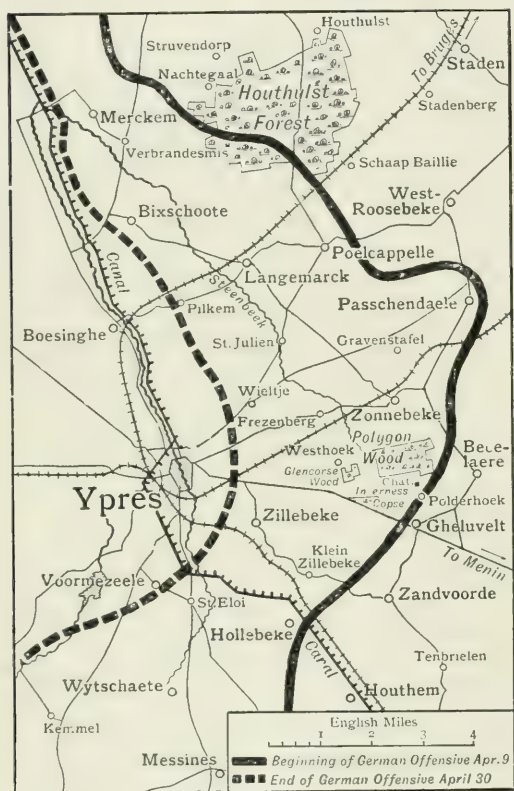
The greatest danger of all had been averted; another remained which had threatened before the attack on the Amiens front had been delivered, and became not less, but more, imminent, when that attack had been brought to a standstill. The attack has been shown to have been inconclusive; being so, the enemy was exposed to a counter-attack on his flank from Montdidier to Noyon along the Oise, and to avoid this counter-attack he must, by striking elsewhere, compel the Allies to turn their attention and direct their energies to staving off a second blow. From the British standpoint it was probable that, for other reasons, the Germans would select the area north of La Bassée Canal for their next venture, apart from the evidence in Sir Douglas Haig's possession that preparations had been made by the enemy for attacking there. The British forces were not at their strongest at the threatened point, for the strategic reason that they had been needed elsewhere.

The exhausting struggle south of the Somme had compelled the British Commander to use up his reserves, and for reinforcements he had been unable to call upon the sector about the Vimy Ridge because an effective German blow struck there would have been fatal. (A blow had been struck

there, and had recoiled on the enemy for the simple reason that our strength had been unimpaired; but any depletion of the forces might have told a very different tale.) Consequently the Flanders front had been drawn upon for reinforcements, and the bulk of the

countryside would have been too sodden for any attacks on a damaging scale. But the rainless spring had dried up the ground; the possibility of an early attack had been converted into a probability. Preparations were made to relieve the Portuguese divisions and to upset the enemy's preparation by a voluntary evacuation of the Passchendaele salient. The Germans were too quick for us. They were on to our thinly held line before the Portuguese division could be relieved. They began with a heavy feint bombardment with gas shells on April 7; they opened the ball at four o'clock in the morning of April 9. As on the morning eighteen days before, their masses came through a thick fog behind their bombardment.

The enemy's attack in the first instance was launched on the northern portion of the front of General Sir H. S. Horne's First Army, held by the 11th Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir R. C. R. Haking), and 15th Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir J. P. Du Cane). On April 10 the right of General Plumer's Second Army, held by the 9th Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir A. Hamilton Gordon), was also involved. In the early stages of the battle the 15th Corps was transferred to the Second Army, and at later dates the extension of the battle front led to the intervention of the 1st Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Holland), on the First Army front, and of the 22nd Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir A. J. Godley), on the Second Army front. Subsequently the 2nd Corps of the Second Army (Lieutenant-General Sir C. W. Jacob), became involved in



Map showing approximately the Allies' Line before and after the German Offensive in Flanders in April, 1918

divisions in the front line there at the end of the first week in April, and in particular the 40th, 34th, 25th, 19th, and 9th Divisions, had already been handled severely on the Somme battlefield.¹ In an ordinary year there need have been no anxiety about their competence to hold the line, because the

¹ Out of Sir Douglas Haig's fifty-eight divisions, forty-six had been engaged in the southern area.

the withdrawal from the Passchendaele salient.

The enemy first found touch with the left brigade of the 2nd Portuguese Division, and though the fog made it impossible to see what was happening, or what did happen, the Germans

Armentières. When the situation was realized the 51st and the 50th Divisions, so recently and so heavily hammered farther south, were moved up to Richebourg St. Vaast and Laventie, on either side of Neuve Chapelle, to co-operate in the defence



British Official Photograph

Before the Battle of the Lys: Portuguese troops in the trenches

broke into the trenches here, and in a few minutes their attack spread like a stain north and south. It did not take long to realize that a heavy attack had been begun on the front of the 55th Division (Major-General Jeudwine), as well as on the Portuguese and on the 40th Division, and that it was extending over a 10-mile front from La Bassée to the Bois Grenier below

that had been arranged. After about four hour's fighting the Germans broke through the forward posts of the right battalion of the 40th Division, and began pushing northwards along the Rue Petillon. Our machine-gun posts continued to fight them till only one gun was left; but the Germans got into Rouge de Bout, beyond Laventie, and actually behind part of the division

which was holding out at Petillon village. The division, its right battalion losing heavily, was pushed back to a most disadvantageous position, in which it faced south (instead of east), and linked up the Bois Grenier, Fleurbaix, and Sailly on the Lys.

The 55th Division, heavily attacked south of the Portuguese sector, was borne back on its left by the first rush, but its main position remained firm, and it formed a flank facing north between Festubert (just north of Givenchy and La Bassée), and a point just south of Le Touret, where, later in the day, it joined up with the troops of the 51st Division. This feat of the 55th Division was one of the outstanding feats of the resistance to be offered to the Germans in the ensuing days. The 55th Division held the southern pivot. If that had gone, the attack on the Lys salient would have furnished a very different tale; but it held firm, and no subsequent effort of the Germans could shake it, so that, though the bulge the enemy made grew larger and deeper, it was never a satisfactory one from their point of view, both because it lacked elbow-room and because on the south (as in the Amiens bulge) it presented an exposed flank. Sir Douglas Haig says of the defence offered by the 55th Division that it would be hard to overestimate its importance. To the Division's advanced posts, who sacrificed themselves, belongs the highest praise for their devotion. They held out when surrounded; they pinned to the spot those of the enemy who had penetrated our defences. Among the many deeds recorded of them is that of a machine-

gun which kept in action though the German infantry had entered the rear compartment of its "pill box"; the gun-team held up the Germans with revolvers, and continued to fire their gun.

The break was to the north of this, where the weight of the Germans had overwhelmed the Portuguese, and their flood flowed so fast that the rear defences of the sector could not be manned in time. The 1st King Edward's Horse and the 11th Cyclist Battalion, which had been sent forward to facilitate the deployment of the 50th and 51st Divisions, had done all that was asked of them, and more, in holding on to La Couture and Vieille Chapelle so as to allow the divisions to come into action along the Lawe River between Le Touret and Estaires, East of Estaires there was a gap, already filled by the enemy, between the 50th and the 40th Division (at Sailly), and it could not be bridged. Consequently the right of the 40th Division was forced back upon the Lys, and had to cross it at Bac St. Maur by the lock bridge. The rest of the division, reinforced by troops of the 34th Division, established themselves in a position between Fort Rompre and Bois Grenier, covering Erquinghem and Armentières from the south. It was not a good position, but they held it against attack the rest of the day. In Fleurbaix, just in advance of it, the 12th Battalion Suffolk Regiment held out till night-fall against attacks on three sides of them. The 50th and 51st Divisions found employment for others of their troops, chiefly newly-arrived drafts, in

trying to hold the bridgeheads of the Lawe River. The Germans brought up guns and got across at Estaires and Pont Riqueul, but were driven back again, so that at the end of the day we held all the crossings as far as Saily. But it was clear that they could not hold them against a renewal of pressure next day, so the troops crossed to the other side in the night, and blew up the bridges as thoroughly as time and opportunity allowed.

It was above Saily, however, that the crucial crossing was made by the Germans, who came on the heels of the troops of the 40th Division at Bac St. Maur, and followed them over the river though the bridge had been blown up. The Germans threw an emergency bridge across, protected it by machine-gun fire, and pushed sufficient men over in small parties to assault Croix du Bac, a mile on the other side. They could not be cleared from it, and by morning they were firmly established on our side of the river.

Next morning (April 10) they began to seek other crossings at Lestrem and Estaires. They got across, were pushed back, and by the end of a whole day's street fighting with the 50th Division, were in Estaires again and could not be put out. The 50th could only await them outside. Meanwhile, east of this town, where they were well over the Lys, they were debouching from Croix du Bac and elsewhere, and pushing the 40th Division in front of them back on Steenwerck. Here they were held up for a time.

But the German attack, like a spreading heath fire, had now blazed up in

another place. The early morning mist had ushered in an intense bombardment and a co-ordinated attack three to five miles farther north at Messines. The outposts of the 25th and 19th Divisions, in line north of Armentières and east of Messines, were driven in, and the Germans worked their way forwards along the Warnave and Douve streams on either side of Ploegsteert Wood. They outflanked Messines village and captured it, and gained the more important part of the wood by midday. In the afternoon their attack spread northward of Messines till it had passed the ridge and touched the Ypres-Comines Canal at the other side of Hollebeke. Here also the outpost line was carried, and the enemy did not pause till he rested in Hollebeke, and had pushed our troops back to the Wytschaete Ridge adjoining that of Messines. To the South African Brigade of the 9th Division fell the task of retaking Messines and clearing Wytschaete, and it was accomplished thoroughly, though as a movement its function was only to gain time. The rest of the 9th Division remained astride the Ypres-Comines Canal without budging. But in the southern sector, where the line had given ground as far as Ploegsteert, the Germans threatened the northern flank of the 34th Division in Armentières. This division had already sustained a heavy frontal attack, and its other flank was in the air; it had to be withdrawn to save it; but its retirement, which began at midday, to the other bank of the Lys was made in good order, and though the Germans pressed it hard they

were unable to prevent the division from destroying the bridges behind it.

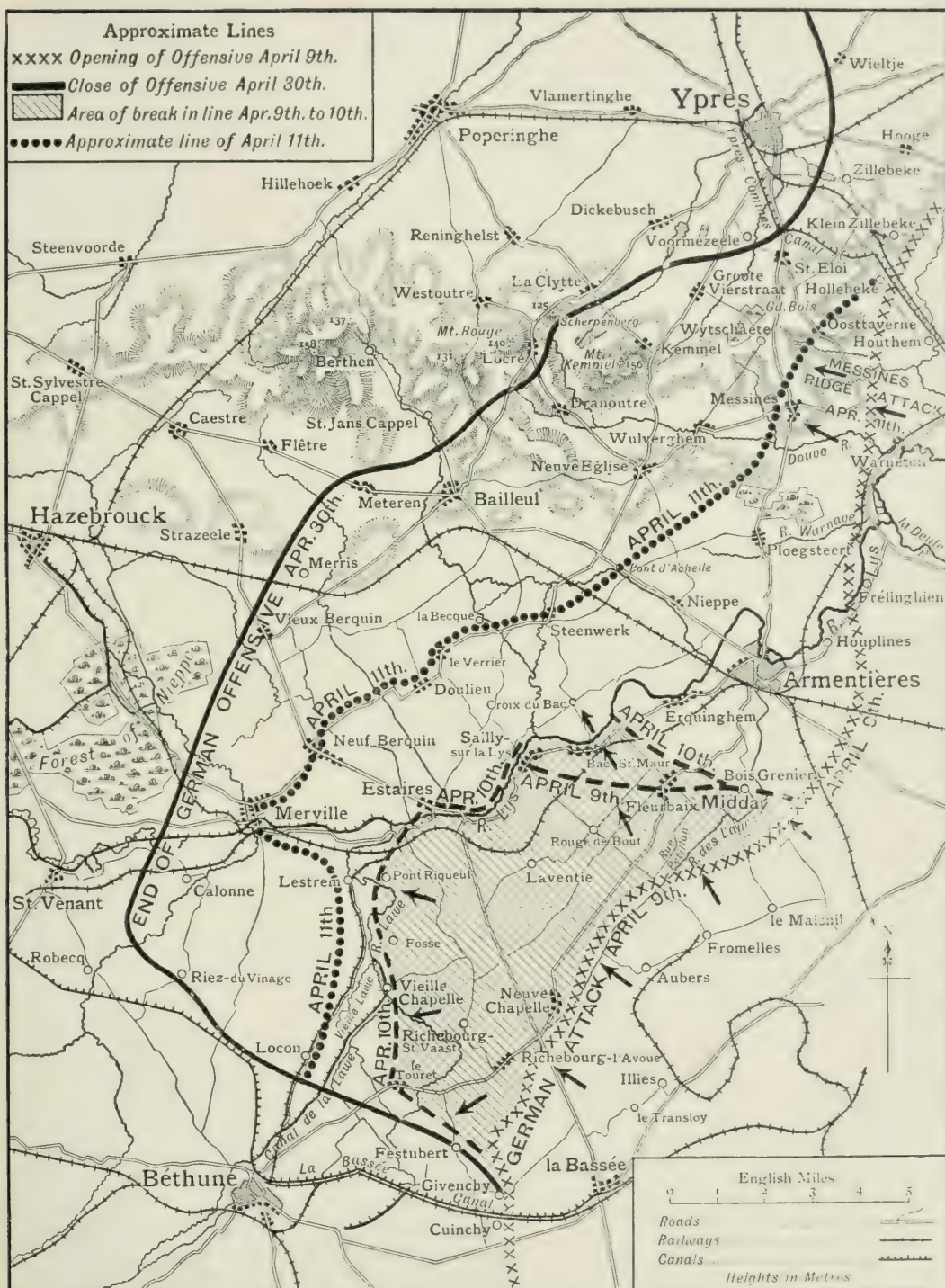
The character both of the attack and the defence altered little next day (April 11). Our right-hand pivot, between Givenchy and La Lawe River, bent but never broke: the German assault broke against it. But beyond this the new line taken up between Locon and Estaires on the river front was pushed back and the bulge deepened. The night before the enemy had made a crossing midway between these two places, and on this day they pressed on to Lestrem, threatening the flank of the 50th Division in Estaires. Estaires evidently could not be held by troops thus threatened. The division reluctantly gave ground, and, after fighting all the morning, went back slowly towards Merville. They had inflicted a great deal of damage on the close-packed German formations, but their line was too long for them to hold, worn and reduced as they were by three previous weeks of fighting. It was not through the resisting companies and platoons of the division, but through the gaps between them, that the Germans found a way, and thus worked along the north-western road to Neuf Berquin, and along the western one to Merville. They could not be cleared out of either; we had to economize our men. North of this, on the road from Neuf Berquin to Steenwerck, where the Germans were, so to speak, inflating the bulge, we continued to fall back before them, but slowly; and the 31st Division, sent up to reinforce, retook, on this road, the hamlets of Le Verrier and La Bacque.

In the Ploegsteert and Messines area, April 11 brought no consolatory incidents. The enemy pressed strongly on from Ploegsteert towards Neuve Eglise, and the 34th Division, after beating off an attack on its position at Nieppe, became automatically out-flanked, and perforce retired along the road to Bailleul, taking up a temporary position at Pont d'Achelle on the Becque stream. Messines was lost again, and though the South African Brigade had driven the Germans back as they attempted to issue from it, and though the 9th Division was still standing solidly at Hollebeke, our positions here had in fact been rendered untenable by the German push to Neuve Eglise. Consequently, a radical shortening of the line was ordered. In a few hours Messines, Wytschaete, Hill 63, the Messines Ridge, and all those places made famous by the deeds of 1917 were renounced, and the line re-drawn from Wytschaete in front of Neuve Eglise and Wolverghens.

These losses, even in retrospect, provoke a sigh; they seemed much more bitter at that time to a people waiting in hope deferred for a sign that the Germans, who had progressed so triumphantly for so long, could be held. The critical nature of the whole situation was revealed by the special order issued to the British army this day by Sir Douglas Haig:—

“To all ranks of the British army in France and Flanders.

“Three weeks ago to-day the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a 50-mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Channel



Germany's Last Bid for the Channel Ports: approximate positions of the Allies' line before and after Ludendorff's offensive in April, 1918

ports, and destroy the British army. In spite of throwing already 106 divisions into the battle, and enduring the most reckless sacrifice of human life, he has, as yet, made little progress towards his goals. We owe this to the determined fighting and self-sacrifice of our troops.

"Words fail me to express the admiration which I feel for the splendid resistance offered by all ranks of our army under the most trying circumstances. Many amongst us now are tired. To those I would say that victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest. The French army is moving rapidly and in great force to our support.

"There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall, and believing in the justice of our cause, each one of us must fight on to the end.

"The safety of our homes and the freedom of mankind depend alike upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment."

How nobly the troops responded the sequel showed. Already a gleam of hope was perceptible in that southern salient from Givenchy, in front of the La Bassée Canal, where the 51st Division had held fast in spite of every German effort to shake them. Not without sacrifice and heroism, however. A sudden attack before dawn on April 12 broke through the division's left centre near Riez du Vinage, and, but for the resource of two batteries, might have enabled a crossing of the canal to be made. But each of these batteries (255th Brigade), one commanded by Major L. N. Davidson, the other by Major F. C. Jack, left a gun in front of the canal when forced to retire, and, assisted by a party of gunners, who held the drawbridge across the canal

with rifles, worked the guns to such good purpose that they stopped the enemy's advance. It was a critical moment; thenceforward reinforcements from the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 31st, and 1st Australian Divisions began to arrive, and, battle-weary though they were, they began first to put a brake on, and then to hold up the enemy's advance permanently. The 3rd Division began work at once about Locon; the 61st Division maintained the 51st's flank beyond Riez du Vinage at the Clarence River. At Merville, too, we improved the situation—by fighting. This part of the salient, though it had still to be fought for, was henceforward fairly safe and stable.

It was north of it that the Germans began to concentrate their efforts. They began on April 12 an attack in force from Neuf Berquin to Steenwerck. Our line was still thin here, and after heavy fighting, in which Sir Douglas Haig commended specially the 1st Battalion Royal Guernsey Light Infantry, 29th Division (Major-General Cayley), the Germans got through at Le Becque and just below Le Verrie at Donlieu. This made a gap in the line and opened up a way to Bailleul. The enemy took it, and made a dash for Merris, west of Bailleul, and south of it. This was one of those damaging breaks which imperil a whole army, as a little leak imperils a dam, for east of Merris, and liable to outflanking thence, were all the troops and material not yet withdrawn from the Messines area and its communications. The dangerous situation was met by drastic

remedies. In the evening a brigade of the 33rd Division (Major-General Pinney) with a body of cyclists, a pioneer battalion, and every available man from schools and reinforcements, was rushed up to stop the leak. On their left troops of three divisions, the 25th, 34th, and 49th (Major-General Cameron) bore the brunt of another heavy attack—with which the Germans sought to exploit and enlarge the opening—and stopped it in front of Bailleul. By midnight we could breathe again.

It was, however, but a breathing-space. The Germans were desperately eager not to let their opportunity slip. They began again in the morning fog of April 13, and our attenuated 29th and 31st Divisions, strung out on a 6-mile front eastwards from Nieppe Forest, were tried to the utmost once again. Major-General Walker's 1st Australian Division had been rushed up. The troops of the 29th and 31st were told they must hold the line at all costs till the Australians could come into action. In the words of Sir Douglas Haig's historic Army Order, their backs were to the wall. They did what they were asked. The first assaults were made on the southern portion of the line, where the 4th Guards Brigade was in position, and were costly failures. They were repeated and reinforced by field-guns brought up to point-blank range, and with their aid Vieux Berquin became the enemy's. Everywhere else the German attacks broke in vain all day against our defence, in which, as heretofore, the positions of sacrifice were those held by the outposts, where men

stood back to back in the trenches when surrounded, shooting to front and rear. The German effort was fed with more men in the afternoon, and the weight of these tore gaps in our thinned line, through which the field-greys stumbled and passed, surrounding the devoted garrisons of the outposts, who died fighting bayonet in hand. It was the expiring effort of these remnants which turned the time scales. While they disputed the way with the Germans the 1st Australian Division kept its appointment behind the forest of Nieppe, organized their line, and barred, for ever, the way to Hazebrouck. It was one of the greatest days of the British resistance. Sir Douglas Haig singles out for praise the work of the 4th Guards Brigade, which held a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -mile front: “No more brilliant exploit had taken place since the opening of the enemy's offensive, though gallant actions had been without number”. Indeed they had, and April 13 was consecrated to the heroism of divisions plucked straight from the Somme battle-field, wearied, nerve-tried, mixed with young reinforcements that had to learn from them how to fight, but yet capable of holding off thrice their weight of Germans.

A less critical struggle took place on this day for Neuve Eglise, which was lost but retaken (and prisoners with it) by troops of the 33rd and 49th Divisions. Another party of the 33rd Division was employed, together with the 34th Division, in fighting on either side of Bailleul along the east and west main road; and these two divisions punished severely Germans

seeking to penetrate their line at Meteren and La Creche. It was fairly clear that Neuve Eglise must go, and Bailleul would follow after; our tactics were to hold them only till a better line could be established. This became evident when the enemy forced his way between La Creche and Neuve Eglise, and tried to encircle the 34th Division's left flank. The division, after maintaining its ground as long as prudence allowed, was withdrawn to the Ravelsberg heights covering Bailleul in the night, the enemy being too shaken to interfere; and late next day (April 14) Neuve Eglise was definitely lost. The Germans had to fight two days and a night for it. The 2nd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment (33rd Division) fought for it almost house by house with bomb and bayonet. That was the chief event of April 14, in which the Germans were forced to take breath.

Having taken it, they renewed the attack on the Bailleul front at Wyt-schaete and the Ravelsberg heights. The day began with a German attack at Wyt-schaete, which the 19th Division repulsed; it followed with the *pièce de résistance* of an attack made by the German Alpine Corps, and two fresh divisions from reserve, on Bailleul and the Ravelsberg heights. The pressure was too heavy for any resistance that we could afford to offer. The hard-trying troops of the 33rd and 34th Divisions fought bravely and long, but the Germans gained first a footing on the ridge's eastern end, and thence worked along it till by dusk they held it all. With the Ravelsberg gone, Bailleul was too hot to hold;

the Germans forced their way into its streets. By midnight they had it all, and our troops were withdrawn to what proved to be their last positions but one on a line between Meteren and Dranoutre.

Some distance farther north than this a withdrawal had been taking place since the night of April 12 and 13, which sent another melancholy thrill through British hearts at home and in the Dominions, for the Passchendaele salient, which so much of the best blood of Britain and of Canada had been spilt to win, was being abandoned in order to reduce our dangers and set free troops that were urgently wanted elsewhere. It seemed to many at this moment that the whole of the Ypres salient must be given up, and that threat hung over us, to all appearance, for many days to come. Yet, though the prospect seemed so black, the position was slowly improving. Sir Douglas Haig had pointed out to Marshal Foch the severity of the strain on the British troops and its long continuance; and the French Generalissimo had replied to these representations by the immediate dispatch of reinforcements, which were already close behind the Flanders lines.

As if in proof of this encouragement, the following days of April 16 and 17 slowed down the German advance perceptibly. A number of strong attacks from Meteren to Wyt-schaete were thrown back by the 25th, 34th, and 49th Divisions, though at the extreme ends of this line the Germans gained a footing in both villages, and could be ejected from neither. These

dubious gains on the flank were followed next day by a determined effort to gain the more important, in short the dominating, position of Mont Kemmel in the centre. They were accompanied by renewed attacks at Meteren and below it in order to prevent reinforcements from leaving that wing; but Mont Kemmel was the real aim of the day, and the attack was sustained with as much determination as any that had preceded it. The Germans had reconstructed roads and ways behind their advance in a manner extremely creditable to their engineering organization, and on these were fast getting up guns, so that the Mont Kemmel attack was preceded by the usual fiery blast of gas shells. But it failed in front of the 34th, 49th, and 19th Divisions, which drove out the German infantry from every footing they gained. The subsidiary attacks at Meteren and Merris were similarly accounted for by the 33rd and 1st Australian Divisions. The day's German repulses included yet another, only indirectly associated with our lines, for an attempt to rush the Belgians in the neighbourhood of Bixchoote, well beyond the Passchendaele Ridge, left 700 German prisoners in Belgian hands.

On these days and the next the outlook from our point of view was made brighter by the breakdown of almost the last German attempt to burst the left side of the great salient outwards. After a bombardment which rivalled, and even at times exceeded, that with which they had paved the way for the great operation on April 9, they flung their infantry against us on a 10-mile

front from Givenchy to west of Merville. They had failed to get Hazebrouck; they might reach Bethune; but they failed at the second as signally as at the first. At Givenchy, and near it at Festubert, their ferocious attack made an impression on our wing position; but having got there they could not stay there, and it was we who won at this point, for after severe and continuous fighting all day the 1st Division (Major-General Strickland) regained the ground lost. Elsewhere the Germans had not the gratification of even a first success, for at every point they were held off by the 4th and 61st Divisions. Had the precedent been followed which had been set in the greater German attack astride the Somme, this repulse would have marked the culmination of the German effort, for during nearly the whole week their attacks dwindled to affairs of outposts, though some of these, especially near Festubert, were fierce; and west of the Lawe the 4th and 61st Divisions were so successful in their efforts to mend little patches in the line that they took 700 German prisoners in the process. The French reinforcements were now coming in behind Meteren, and were gradually taking over from us the sector between there and Wytschaete, which, for convenience, may be called the Mont Kemmel area.

But this relief very nearly proved our undoing, or, if that be too strong an expression, gave us fresh causes of embarrassment by forcing us to consider anew the possibility of evacuating the Ypres salient, with all its commitments of material. The Germans

continually and rightly chose for their offensive operations the points where the junction, or interspersion, of two distinct forces of the Allies was to be found. They were at this moment seeking for a fresh spot to continue their initiative, which they could not afford to relinquish lest a counter-blow should take them on one of the flanks which in their unfinished salients they had created for themselves; and Mont Kemmel, with new unaccustomed reinforcements not yet settled down about it, presented the opportunity.

On April 25 they began an attack in the grand manner, with nine divisions, of which five were fresh, on the front from Bailleul to the Ypres-Comines Canal, less than a mile for each assaulting division. Kemmel Hill was what they sought, though the attempt on this, by a frontal attack on the French, was joined to an attempt to wedge themselves between us and the French near Wytschaete. The British right flank here rested on the road from Messines to Kemmel, about half-way between Kemmel and Wytschaete. The attack on the French began at five o'clock in the morning, and in five hours the Germans, after working their way round the lower slopes, had captured Kemmel village and the big hill, the highest of the low range. French troops in desperate companies held out in the village and on the hill, but the position was gone. There is no way of accounting for the loss except that the attack was too heavy for the numbers of the defence, and that the French were not expecting

so fierce a recrudescence of German effort after the week's pause. Sir Douglas Haig naturally makes no comment; the only comments that are permissible are that neither the French nor ourselves expected to lose the hill; and that the French, great



General Friedrich von Bernhardi, who advocated the Great World War in his *Germany and the Next War* and other works, and commanded one of the German army corps in the Battle of the Lys

fighters, as always they were, had a bad day.

The British troops, fiercely assailed, but possibly not in such numbers, held their positions longer. The weight of the attack about Wytschaete fell on the 9th Division, with some help from the 49th, and they held on till after midday, and even then were clinging to

the Grand Bois, north of Wytschaete. Later in the day the Germans extended their attack northwards, and gradually our whole line here was pressed back till it rested on a line running from Hill 60, near Wytschaete, behind the Grand Bois, to Voormezele. Here, however, we held out a hand to the French at La Clytte, and the line was unbroken. It remained unbroken. Reinforcements were hurried up, and, as far as could be, the mistakes of the day before, if not rectified, were in part repaired. We began by a counter-attack at Kemmel, in which the 25th Division joined with the French and with troops of the 21st and 49th Divisions. We got into the village, and though we could not keep it, we brought back 700 Germans. Brigade all had heavy fighting to do. The French also fiercely counter-attacked at Locre and regained it in a manner worthy of their great traditions.

But when all was done the loss of Kemmel made it necessary for us to undertake precautionary and difficult adjustments of our line. Consequently, on the night of April 26-27, we withdrew to a new line Pilckem, Wieltje, west end of Zillebeke Lake, and Voormezele. We were, in fact, pushed farther back and nearer the Channel ports than we had been for four years, a fact on which some Jeremiads were penned by inexperienced military critics, but which was of far less importance than it seemed, for the German dispositions did not at this time permit them to exploit their success much farther. They could hope at most to keep us busy. This they

did during the rest of the month. On April 29, following on local fighting at either extremity of the Kemmel sector, they began at dawn an attack of magnitude against the whole of the Franco-British front from Dranoutre to Voormezele. It ended in a repulse, similar in kind, though not as great, as that with which the Germans put an end at Arras to their great Somme attack of March-April. Once they got Locre and the ridge known as the Scherpenberg behind Kemmel. The French, who had never forgiven Kemmel's loss, would have fought to the last man rather than cede anything more. They threw the Germans out.

On the British front the first German attacks broke down before the 21st, 49th, and 25th Divisions. Two attacks were beaten off; a third was desperately made in mass formation, and with fixed bayonets! The 49th Division asked nothing better. They dealt with it severely. The Germans fled with losses proportionate to their failure and their numbers. Other attacks followed on this division, as well as on the 21st, and the troops of the 30th and 31st attached to it. They all failed. Our artillery had targets all day that could not be missed; more than once our troops went out eagerly, bayonet in hand, to meet the Germans. It was enough. At the end of the day our line was intact. The enemy's failure was complete. They acknowledged it by a cessation of any attacks of importance. The French retook Locre; and by the end of April, in the northern salient as in the southern, the Germans were held.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER III

THE LULL ON THE MAIN BRITISH FRONT

(May-July, 1918).

Results of Ludendorff's Offensive against the British—Fighting for Time—Filling the Gaps—Enemy's Disastrous Losses—Sir Douglas Haig's Policy of Active Defence—New Railways and Defensive Lines—Harassing the Enemy—Some Minor Operations—Australian Exploits—Awaiting Ludendorff's Next Move—Independence Day on the British Front—Americans at the Capture of Hamel—Clemenceau's Tribute to the Australians—Foch's Request for more British Divisions—British Troops in the Second Battle of the Marne—Position of Sir Douglas Haig's Army at the End of July—the Enemy's Lost Illusions.

MAY-DAY of 1918, after the six weeks of desperate fighting described in the preceding chapter, found the German legions definitely held on both the southern and northern battle-fronts of the British army. The massed courage of 106 different German divisions, all specially trained for the new tactics of Ludendorff's offensive, had failed to achieve its purpose against the stubborn defence of 56 British divisions. It had failed to bring the enemy within reach of his goal either on the Somme or the Lys, and, moreover, had failed utterly to crush the spirit of our troops. Though many of our divisions, after bearing the brunt of the fighting on the Somme, had been immediately afterwards passed through the furnace of the Lys Battle, there was never a thought of final defeat. Their Commander-in-Chief proudly bears witness to the fact that, after being exposed to the full fury of both battles, the spirit of these indomitable troops remained as high as ever, and their courage and determination unabated.

"At no time, either on the Somme or on the Lys," he writes, "was there anything

approaching a break-down of command or a failure of *moral*. . . . Officers and men remained undismayed, realizing that for the time being they must play a waiting game, and determined to make the enemy pay the full price for the success which for the moment was his."

Yet the situation at the beginning of May, and for weeks afterwards, remained fraught with the gravest anxieties for the Allied High Command. Though the Germans had failed to break the Allies' line, they had stretched our resources to the uttermost, and brought us, both before Amiens and Hazebrouck, dangerously close to strategic points of vital importance. On the Somme, in particular, they had carried practically the whole of our organized lines of defence. It was known that they still possessed some 75 divisions in reserve, and with every incentive to force a decision before the full weight of the American army could be thrown into the scale, it was obvious that they must soon return to the attack, or acknowledge defeat. The American army was growing rapidly, both in size and efficiency, but it would be months before it could take the field

in sufficient strength materially to affect the situation. We were now, in short, fighting for time, with the odds in favour of Ludendorff striking again with all his might before many weeks were over.

"The enemy still possessed a sufficient superiority of force to retain the initiative," wrote Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch of December 26, "and it was known that he

sure open to us were undertaken promptly, and executed with the energy and zeal demanded by the occasion, the enemy's future assaults would be met and overthrown as those had been which he had already made. If the Allies could preserve their front unbroken until August at the latest, there was every hope that during the later portion of the year they would be able to regain the initiative, and pass to the offensive in their turn."



Official Photograph

Getting their Machine-gun Across

would be compelled to act within a comparatively limited time if he were to turn his superiority to account before it passed from him. These were the two main factors which had to be taken into consideration when deciding the policy of the British armies during the late spring and early summer. The common object of the French and ourselves was to tide over the period which must still elapse until the growth of the American armies and the arrival of Allied reinforcements placed the opposing forces once more on a footing of equality. The situation was an anxious one, but it was confidently expected that, if all mea-

It was the repeatedly expressed opinion of the Allied High Command at this time—early in May,—that the enemy would return to the attack on a grand scale on the Arras-Amiens-Montdidier front, where his opening blow had already brought him within measurable distance of success. The British General Staff, on the other hand, consistently held the view that before resuming this main offensive he would follow

his recent attack on our northern flank in Flanders with a similar assault on the southern flank of the Allied armies. This view, as Sir Douglas Haig points out, proved correct. Towards the end of May the enemy developed his new plan of operations on the lines which the British General Staff had foreshadowed, launching the violent surprise attack on the Aisne front with which in due course we shall have occasion to deal.

For the moment we are only

concerned with the situation during the late spring and early summer on the British front, where Ludendorff's unexpectedly heavy commitments in the Somme and Lys battles had not a little to do with the delay in renewing his main offensive in the direction of Amiens. He had been made to pay in full for his successes in both these battles. Not only had he used up a great number of divisions, but the troops thus sacrificed had formed the very flower of the German army. He could make good the losses with his reserves, but it would be weeks before the divisions which had suffered most would be sufficiently rested, and trained afresh, to launch, with any chance of success, against prepared positions.

Ever since the conclusion of his attacks on the Somme front, however, the enemy had been hard at work re-establishing communications throughout the devastated area, and making his preparations for a fresh advance. We, too, had been working with untiring energy, but our new trench line was still very far from complete at the beginning of May, and our defences could not be compared with those which had already been overrun. Our own losses, also, had been so heavy that it was impossible to maintain at an effective strength the full number of our divisions. As many as eight of our divisions had been reduced to cadres, and temporarily written off altogether as fighting units. Five others, comprising the 9th Corps, newly reconstituted, had just been handed over to the French for employment on a quiet part of the line,

being particularly in need of rest and training, our Allies, in return, dispatching a number of their own divisions to be held in reserve behind the British right, as well as to strengthen the line in Flanders.

"There remained available for operations on the British front," records Sir Douglas Haig, "forty-five British infantry divisions, most of which were below establishment. Fully three-fourths of them had been heavily engaged in one or other of the enemy's offensives, if not in both. All were urgently in need of rest; they contained a large number of young, partially-trained, and totally-inexperienced recruits, and subordinate commanders who had had little or no opportunity to become acquainted with their men."

Until, therefore, the steady influx of American and Allied reinforcements had produced the necessary equilibrium of strength between the opposing forces, the obvious policy for Sir Douglas Haig, so far as the main British army was concerned, was to maintain an active defence the while he closed the breaches which the German advance had made in our defensive positions, and relieved the dangerous situation caused by the disruption of the lateral lines of railway in the Somme and Lys valleys. At Amiens, Béthune, and Hazebrouck alike the enemy's guns were now within active range of railway junctions which fed our main lines of communication in Northern France, and a vast programme of railway construction work had to be undertaken at once, in conjunction with the French, in order to provide three separate routes for north-and-south traffic independent

of Amiens. Not only had existing railways to be developed, but new lines had to be built, some 200 miles of broad-gauge track being laid for this purpose during the period under review.

"All these various constructional needs threw an immense amount of work upon the staff of the departments concerned, and called for the employment of great quantities of skilled and unskilled labour. All available resources of men and material were concentrated upon satisfying them, and by the time that the great change in the general military situation had taken place the essential part had been satisfactorily accomplished. In particular, a complete series of new defensive lines had been built, involving the digging of 5000 miles of trench."

In the meanwhile, on the fighting front, while every opportunity was taken to rest and train our battle-worn, and, in many cases, reconstituted divisions, no opportunity was lost of keeping the enemy's nerves on edge and swelling his already appalling list of casualties. The war of attrition was waged remorselessly. By day and night bombing squadrons of the Royal Air Force attacked the hostile railway junctions and centres of activity. Reconnaissance machines returned with invaluable information from both far and near; while artillery machines maintained a fearless vigil over German batteries, besides acting as observers for our own guns. In the Lys sector especially widespread and tremendous havoc was wrought by our gunners, where the German troops, crowded into shell-torn dug-outs, paid heavy and incessant toll to

a most effective system of artillery-fire—tactics which, to quote from the Commander-in-Chief's dispatch, "undoubtedly postponed the renewal of the German offensive on this front until the Allied counter-offensive made it impossible".

During all these tense weeks of waiting, our infantry shared in the harassing tactics wherever opportunity served for a successful minor operation. They were especially busy on the fighting fronts of the Second and Fourth Armies. Early in May the Australians, keen as ever to be up and doing, began thrusting along the high ground between the Ancre and the Somme, pushing our line steadily forward in the region of Morlancourt until they were ready to pounce on the village of Ville-sur-Ancre—shown in our map on p. 82, a few miles below Albert. This attack took place on May 19, and, in Sir Douglas Haig's own words, "was an admirably executed operation", carried out by the 2nd Australian Division under Major-General N. M. Smyth. It was a moonlight affair, with every advantage of position in favour of the enemy, who, evidently anticipating something of the sort, had sent up reinforcements that very night. They were no match, however, for the Australians, who, though forced in places to wade knee-deep through the flooded valley, gained all their objectives behind their creeping barrage, and completed their task in the village with characteristic thoroughness. Besides a very useful piece of ground, they took more than 400 prisoners and something like 30 machine-guns.

Three weeks later, the same division launched a similar attack, looking upon these night adventures, according to Mr. Philip Gibbs, who paid them a visit about this time, "as a kind of fierce sport with a risk of death in it that only tuned them up to an intenser vitality". On the present occasion, after rehearsing the piece in every detail, as though it were some

the Australians, with a brigade of the 18th Division, had covered themselves with glory a few weeks previously. There had been a memorable attack by the Germans in this area on April 23—just as the Lys Battle, described in our last chapter, had died down—in which the whole British front south of the Somme was attacked by four German divisions under cover of fog.



Railway Destruction in Flanders: one of the main-line bridges in Courtrai

dramatic performance, and planning the whole with scientific accuracy, they advanced our line in front of Morlancourt to a depth of nearly half a mile, on a front of about a mile and a half, besides adding another 300 prisoners to their bag. Bit by bit they had now carried our line forward at this point some 5000 yards from that to which we had fallen back at the end of March.

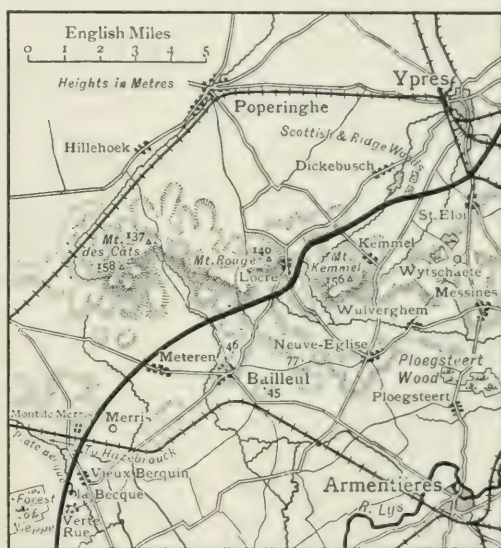
This had straightened out the line between Albert in the north and Villers-Bretonneux in the south, where

This was the occasion on which German and British Tanks had come into conflict for the first time. In the initial onset the German Tanks broke through our line and enabled the enemy to gain possession of Villers-Bretonneux. Though our heavy Tanks helped the "Whippets" eventually to drive back the enemy's Tanks, the loss of Villers-Bretonneux would have been a critical matter had the Germans been able to exploit this success. Their triumph, however, was short-lived. An immediate counter-attack was planned

and launched the same night by a brigade of the 18th Division, and the 13th and 15th Brigades of the 4th and 5th Australian Division (Major-General Sir J. J. T. Hobbs). Undertaken at such short notice, a night operation of this character, as Sir Douglas Haig pointed out, was an enterprise of great daring. The 13th Australian Brigade earned special mention for its skill and resolution in the assault, making its way through belts of wire running diagonally to the line of its advance, across difficult country which it had had no opportunity of reconnoitring beforehand. When day dawned the German garrison found themselves practically surrounded. Two battalions of the 8th Division completed the enemy's discomfiture during the morning by working their way through the streets and houses, and overcoming all resistance; and before the afternoon was over Villers-Bretonneux was again completely in our possession, together with nearly a thousand prisoners.

The Australians with General Plumer's Second Army were also to the fore in minor operations, which, though the brief accounts of them were swallowed up at the time in the news of mightier happenings from the French front—where on May 27 the Germans had launched their new offensive on the Aisne—formed an essential part of the tactics which gradually undermined the enemy's strength. On June 3 the 1st Australian Division, under Major-General Sir H. B. Walker, whose name had been chosen by the Anzacs for "Walker's Ridge", Gallipoli, joined with other heroes of the Dardanelles

adventure, the famous 29th Division under Major-General D. E. Cayley, in an assault west of Merris village which resulted in the capture of the important hill known as the Mont de Merris, together with nearly 300 prisoners. Merris was one of the out-post defences of Hazebrouck and the road to the Channel ports, and had changed hands more than once in the



The British Line on the Second Army Front South-east of Ypres in Mid-June, 1918

recent Battle of the Lys. For the time being it still remained in German hands.

Another storm centre along the battle-front of the Second Army was formed by Locre Hospice and the small woods south-west of Dickebusch Lake, known as Scottish and Ridge Woods. This area was still held by the French troops sent to help us in the critical hours of the Lys Battle. On May 20, anticipating another German attempt to regain possession of ground which had already been won

and lost alternately, our Allies forestalled it with an advance which not only destroyed the enemy's plans, but also resulted in the gain of 500 prisoners and valuable positions on the slopes. The Hospice itself was not finally secured, however, until the beginning of July. Ridge Wood also changed hands several times before the 6th Division, under Major-General Sir T. O. Marden, and the 33rd Division, under Major-General Sir R. J. Pinney, brought it permanently within our lines on July 14.

On the rest of the main British front the general situation remained unchanged. Men marvelled at the length of the unexpected breathing-space accorded by the enemy, and wondered what new devilry the German High Command could be brewing against the most hated of all its foes. There were stories that the so-called Spanish influenza, which swept across all countries indiscriminately at this period, had the Germans facing us firmly in its grip, but this was not sufficient to account for the prolonged lull which, happily coinciding with a spell of glorious summer weather, worked wonders in the condition of the war-worn British armies. There had been time for much needed rest; time to absorb all the drafts which had been hurried out from home to fill the fearful gaps in our ranks; time for the arrival of our reinforcements from other and less vital theatres of war; so that after two months of comparative quiet the number of our effective infantry divisions had grown from forty-five to fifty-two, and we were stronger in

artillery than ever before. There had been time, too, to strengthen our lines, where they were still weak, with some of the ardent young troops from across the Atlantic, who were now pouring into France in enormous numbers. Towards the end of May the enemy had launched his new offensive with a violent surprise attack on the Aisne front. Certain British divisions which had been sent there to rest became involved from the outset, as we shall presently see, but the British front as a whole, though full of incident of a minor character, remained comparatively quiet.

Thus, by the end of June, Sir Douglas Haig, though still forced to move warily, in view of the concentration of the bulk of Prince Rupprecht's group of armies opposite his front, again felt strong enough to undertake operations of a somewhat larger scope. The first of these was carried out on June 28 on a front of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles east of Nieppe Forest, where the Germans had struck their hardest in their last onrush for the Channel ports, but failed to capture the high ground east of Mont Kemmel. The object of the new move was to establish our line of resistance farther in advance of this evil stretch of woodland, constantly drenched as it was with the enemy's gas, and that object was achieved by the 5th Division, under Major-General R. B. Stephens, and the 31st Division, under Major-General J. Campbell. The Prussians and Saxons holding the debatable ground were taken completely by surprise when the Yorkshire and Lancashire troops, as well as men from

the Southern Counties, sprang upon them without the slightest preliminary bombardment, catching them before breakfast, and overwhelming them before they had time to realize quite what was happening. With few casualties to our own men, all our objectives

future plans for disengaging Amiens. It was July 4, the day of American Independence, and provided one of the many dramatic coincidences of the war, the Americans on the British front celebrating the occasion by going into battle for the first time, fighting



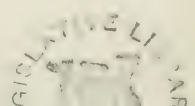
Ministry of Information

America's New Army in France: United States infantry passing British troops resting by the roadside

were gained, including the hamlets of L'Épinette, Verte Rue, and La Becque, together with some 400 prisoners.

Six days later this success was followed by a more significant move—the recapture of our old positions east of Hamel and Vaire Woods, and the clearing of the Villers-Bretonneux plateau as a necessary preliminary to

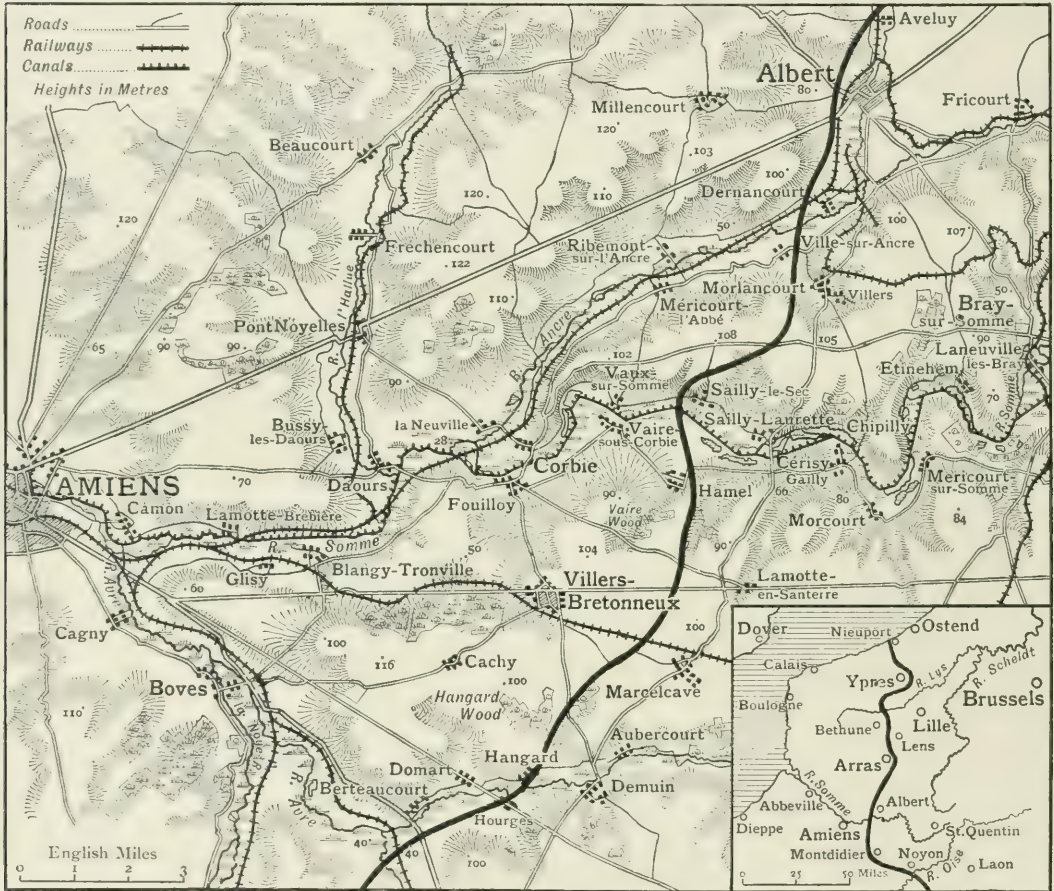
shoulder to shoulder with the famous Australian Corps under General Monash, to whom the main task had been allotted. The Americans were few in numbers compared with the Australians, consisting only of four companies of their 33rd Division, but they were all on their mettle, each and every one fighting as though the whole credit of the United States was



on his shoulders. So keen were their comrades to be in it that some of those not selected borrowed Australian tunics and smuggled their way into the Australian ranks in time for the advance.

The chosen companies were ad-

to do the same." They did not disappoint him. The only criticism that could be urged against them was on the score of excessive keenness, which carried some of them forward right into our barrage, when, in the small



Map showing the Approximate Line of the Fourth British Army before Amiens after the capture of Hamel and Vaire Wood, and the clearing of the Villers-Bretonneux Plateau by the Australians and Americans on July 4, 1918

dressed by their commanding officer before the battle in words which tuned them up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm. They were going in, he said, to fight in company with some of the finest troops in the world. "The Australians always delivered the goods," he added, "and we expect you

hours of the morning, they followed the brief whirlwind bombardment which preceded the attack. "*Lusitania!*" they shouted as their battle-cry, as, with bayonets fixed, they pressed forward, with the Australians on either side of them, on that memorable Fourth of July. It was a call for

vengeance which filled many German hearts with terror before that day was done. Apart from this fierce "blood-ing" of the Americans in our ranks, the most striking feature of the attack was the close and active co-operation between our Tanks and the infantry. Sixty Tanks were employed on this occasion, and the Americans and Australians alike were loud in the praise of their splendid work.

"Moving up and down behind the barrage," to quote from Sir Douglas Haig's account, "the Tanks either killed the enemy or forced him to take shelter in dug-outs, where he became an easy prey to the infantry. Hamel was taken by envelopment from the flanks and rear; the enemy was driven from Vaire Wood; and at the end of the day our troops had gained all their objectives and over 1500 prisoners."

Sir Douglas sent his congratulations both to General Monash, commanding the Australians, and to the General commanding the American units, warmly praising "the skill and gallantry" of all the troops engaged. The news of the capture of Hamel reached Paris while the Dominion Prime Ministers, who were attending the Supreme War Council, were sitting in conference with M. Clemenceau and Mr. Lloyd George. All sent telegrams of congratulation to the troops, and on the following day, M. Clemenceau motored over especially to express his admiration in person for all that the Dominion forces had done, not only on this occasion, but ever since the war began.

"I am glad to be able to speak a small amount of English," he said in an informal little speech to them, quoted by their official

correspondent, Mr. C. E. W. Bean, "because it enables me to tell you what all French people think of you. They expected a good deal, because they know what you have accomplished in the development of your country. They were not surprised that you fulfilled all their expectations, even judged by the high standard by which they judge and admire you. At Hamel the Germans had against them men who came from far away to attest that, wherever free people lived—England, France, Australia, New Zealand, Canada—they were not ready to make way for the rule of brutality which the Germans are trying to impose upon the world. We knew you would fight a real fight, but we did not know that, from the very beginning, you would astonish the whole Continent with your valour. I have come here for the simple purpose of seeing the Australians and telling them this."

To the people of Australia M. Clemenceau at the same time sent the following telegram:—

"I send my heartiest congratulations to the people of Australia on the very fine deeds their children have accomplished in this old land, which never expected to see them in war, but only as visiting friends in times of peace. We knew what they could do in peace in their own country. In these dark days in this old country they have shown what they can do in war. It gives us the greatest pleasure to acknowledge what they have done. I greet the Australian people, and congratulate them with all my heart on what they have accomplished amongst us."

Save for violent shelling in Flanders, and occasional raids by Londoners and others, as well as further nibbling by the Australians on their restless sectors of the line, the next week continued ominously quiet along the main British front. The enemy's advance

farther south in the direction of Paris —described in Chapter VII— had again been stayed, though he had recaptured the Chemin-des-Dames, and, forcing the passage both of the Aisne and the Vesle, had reached the Marne on a 10-mile front, between Château Thierry and Dormans, besides sweeping the French back on the Montdidier-Noyon front. This new onslaught had been brought to a standstill by the middle of June, when the great Austrian offensive was launched against the Italian front from the Asiago plateau to the sea—destined to end before the close of the month in Austria's decisive and annihilating defeat.

The hour was approaching for the decisive development of Ludendorff's final effort, and among the British, as well as the Allied armies, everyone remained keenly on the alert. Marshal Foch, having stemmed the tide in the new battle of the Marne, was recovering certain points of tactical importance in the Marne "pocket", with a shrewd eye to the future. His resources, however, had been sorely strained by the furious fighting since May 27, and, confident that the next German blow would fall east and west of Rheims, he not only withdrew the whole of his 8th French Division from Flanders during the early weeks of July, in

order to transfer them to his own front, but also asked that four more British divisions might be moved down to ensure the connection between the French and British armies about Amiens. It was a request involving the British Commander-in-Chief in the gravest responsibility. Prince Rupprecht's reserve group of divisions was still intact, and opposite the British



Canadian War Records

Ready for Ludendorff's Last Effort: gas-masks for horse and man

front; and it was not impossible that the enemy's next move might again be made in our own direction. For a number of reasons, however, it was firmly believed at the French Head-quarters that the Germans were now staking their all on a grand attack in the Rheims sector, and Sir Douglas Haig, after carefully weighing the situation, acceded to Marshal Foch's request. His own strength had been steadily increasing through all the precious weeks of comparative quiet on the British front, and his confidence in

Marshal Foch was supreme. The cordiality of their relations is shown in the personal tribute which he pays in his dispatch "to the foresight and determination of the French Marshal, in whose hands the co-ordination of the action of the Allied arms was placed". On July 13, two days before the enemy launched his last attack, exactly as expected, a further request was received from the French Generalissimo to the effect that these four additional British divisions might be placed unreservedly at his disposal, and that four other British divisions might be sent to take their places behind the junction of the Allied armies. To this request, as will be shown in due course, Sir Douglas Haig also agreed.

While the storm was thus brewing, the main British armies kept the enemy continually on the *qui vive*, and their own fighting spirit in good trim by minor operations on their own front. General Walker's 1st Australian Division, in Plumer's Second Army, continued its effective policy of pin-pricks in the Merris area, where, with the 29th Division, they had recaptured Mont de Merris on June 3. So complete was the individual ascendancy of the Australians over the German infantry, that on July 11 four of them on patrol duty returned with between twenty and thirty prisoners. Sir Douglas Haig also mentions that other parties, both from the Australian Division and the 31st Division, secured in two days no fewer than 223 prisoners, besides establishing a number of new posts well in advance of our former line. Some weeks later

shortly after midnight on July 29-30—the 1st Australian Division rounded off its gains in this area by a dashing advance which resulted in the capture of Merris village itself.

Earlier in the same month, while the Second Battle of the Marne was at its height, the 9th (Scottish) Division, whose heroic deeds in the Battle of Loos have been immortalized by Ian Hay in *The First Hundred Thousand*, and who were now on the left of the 1st Australians, took up the running with a surprise attack on Meteren, where the enemy's, 81st Reserve Division, composed mainly of Prussian troops, had already been heavily punished by our guns ever since that part of the line fell into German hands. Though the once prosperous little town had been reduced to a mere heap of rubble since the enemy's last advance, it was a point of considerable tactical importance, standing on high ground close to our line, and its capture was necessary to provide us with greater depth to our defence. The attack was preceded by a smoke screen and gas discharge, as well as by a high-explosive shell bombardment, and when the Scotsmen of the 9th Division (Major-General H. H. Tudor) advanced behind their barrage, the Prussians, expecting only a discharge of gas, had in many cases put on their gas masks and taken refuge in their shell-torn dug-outs. The conflict was close and sanguinary, but in an incredibly short time the 9th Division had taken Meteren with some 350 prisoners, and advanced its line on a front of about 4000 yards. At the same time the Australians on their

right had extended the attack farther to the south, and also succeeded in occupying the ground assigned to them.

By the end of July, Sir Douglas Haig was able to record that the reconstitution of the British armies was complete.

"The spirit of the men was as high as ever, and the success of their various local operations had had a good effect. I had once more at my command an effective striking force, capable of taking the offensive with every hope of success when the proper moment should arrive."

By this time the Germans were again reeling from the fatal Marne under Marshal Foch's repeated blows. They had at last shot their bolt; and all the hopes and cherished illusions which had hitherto buoyed them up were to prove as worthless as the "Scrap of Paper" on which their War Lords had pledged their own word of honour years before. Instead of having exhausted the Allies' reserves, as they had so often been assured, they now found themselves attacked on all sides by French, British, Italians, and Americans; while the main British army, mightier than ever, only bided its time to complete their confusion by striking with all its strength on another front; and the American host, which the submarine was to have prevented from ever crossing the Atlantic, was arriving in ever-increasing numbers, throwing its weight into the scale at the decisive hour to prove, as General

Pershing said, that America's sense of justice had not blunted either her manliness or her courage. One of the last illusions of the German soldiery was shattered when, towards the end of



British Official Photograph

On Active Service: Captain the Prince of Wales

this July, the United States Secretary of War announced that the total number of American troops embarked for France already amounted to one million and a quarter, and that others were following as fast as transports could carry them.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICA IN THE WAR

(April 2, 1917--March, 1918)

A State of War formally proclaimed—Different Treatment of Count Bernstorff and Mr. Gerard—Military Forces of the Republic—The Army Draft Bill—Unavoidable Delays—Financial Measures—Production of Munitions and Shipping—European Missions—Influence of Marshal Joffre—The first American Troops in the Field—General Pershing—Training at Home and in France—Composition and Quality—A March Past—Revelations of German Intrigue—The American National Council—Its Extension and Achievements.

THE events which led to the direct participation of the United States in the war have been recorded in Chapter III, Vol. VII. Although Mr. Wilson did not call on Congress to vote that a state of war actually existed until April 2, 1917, there had been no doubt in the minds of those who directed the policy of the Republic that there could be but one end to the otherwise insoluble difficulty created by the suspension of diplomatic relations on the previous February 3. The President's apparent reluctance to accept actual conflict as inevitable had, as all who could realize the character of the militarist rulers of Germany foresaw, only served to encourage further aggression.

To observers in Europe it even appeared strange that Americans could fail to understand that war had actually begun, whether they recognized the fact by words or not. Count Bernstorff, the German Ambassador to Washington, had received his passports. The American Government acted towards him with dignified courtesy. It arranged that the steamer in which he was to make the voyage

home should go into Halifax for search, so that he would not be subjected to the risk of being taken to Kirkwall when he reached European waters. The answer of the Imperial Government of Germany was to treat Mr. Gerard, the American Ambassador in Berlin, with outrageous rudeness. It not only professed to have the right to retain him as a hostage, but made an equally vulgar and inept attempt to bully him into signing a declaration purporting the renewal of a long-defunct treaty made between the United States and the kingdom of Prussia in 1799—as if a signature extorted by pressure from a diplomatic agent could have the least validity. Had the treaty remained in force it would have secured the Germans nine months in which to withdraw their ships and subjects from the States.

The ships had been seized at once. One of them was scuttled at Savannah, and the machinery of all the others was smashed by the crews. Germany did endeavour to re-open negotiations by the intermediary of Switzerland, but did so in a way which added another piece of insolence to all that had gone before. On February 13, 1917,

the United States was gravely asked to negotiate on the distinct understanding that the submarine blockade, the very cause of the dispute between the countries, was to go on as before. Mr. Lansing, the American Secretary of State, made the obvious answer that the blockade must be suspended as a preliminary to further relations. Even after this Mr. Wilson delayed to take the step which would constitute a formal recognition of existing fact. It was not until the Germans had sunk the American steamers *City of Memphis*, *Illinois*, and *Vigilancia*, and had broken another of their promises by attacking two Belgian relief ships, that he took the final step.

Congress had been summoned to meet on April 12; but in view of the urgency of the circumstances the meeting was accelerated, and the President made his address on April 2. By this time Mr. Wilson had achieved the object at which he had no doubt been aiming. He had secured entire unanimity among the people of the United States. The Republican party, for which Mr. Roosevelt spoke with his usual emphasis, had long been urging him to declare war. But he had secured the support of the Democrats, and his own re-election, by striving for peace. He did not wish to accept an unwelcome necessity till he had carried patience to the very limit at which it would become cowardice. On April 2 he could be sure that only a negligible minority of the inhabitants of the States would refuse to agree with him when he said that:

"Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is

involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic governments, backed by organized force, which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their Governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized States."

The Congress could make but one answer. The existence of a state of war was recognized on April 5 by all except a few dissentients, who spoke only for themselves. The calculation that Americans of German descent would prefer the country of their origin to that of their adoption was shown to be as completely mistaken as most of the estimates formed by the much-vaunted diplomacy of Berlin and the much-praised "General Staff". When American troops did come to the field of war in Europe they included a large element of Germans by descent, who amply proved their loyalty to their adopted country.

When the United States was finally committed to active operations against Germany, the military forces at its immediate command were not organized on a scale which promised early or effective action. The navy may for the moment be left out of the account. It was not at sea that the aid of America was most essential to the Allies. The American army, though well appointed, and, for the purposes for which it had hitherto been required, abundantly efficient, was but small when compared with the hosts put in

the field by European Powers. The paper strength was but 107,641 officers and men. Nor were they all available. When garrisons scattered from Alaska to the Canal zone, in the West Indies, and the Pacific or China Seas are allowed for, there remained only 3622 officers and 67,416 men—71,038 in all. The existence of a National Guard of 150,000 in a fair state of readiness would indeed have allowed of the immediate dispatch abroad of the standing army. Its presence in France would have given a valuable moral support to the French and British forces, but its material strength was far below the desirable level.

For a little while the American people, though enthusiastic in its support of the President's policy, seemed to fail to grasp the real meaning of the unwonted task in hand. Only 130,000 recruits came forward during the three months following the declaration of April 2. This apparent languor was not due to indifference. The truth, no doubt, was that the nation was waiting for a call in the shape of the imposition of a legally pronounced duty. Conscription, or, as the Americans prefer to say, "a draft", such as had been usual in the colonial period of American history, and had been known in the War of Secession, was proposed in the early days of April. The Act by which it was made obligatory was passed on May 17.

By the terms of this enactment all men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty, inclusive, were rendered liable to be called out. The number required would be fixed by the State, and would be taken by selective draft.

The standing army was to be raised to full war strength. The National Guards were to be incorporated into the Federal Army. A million of men were to be actually drawn if necessary. A somewhat fantastic proviso, which was understood to have been adopted on the suggestion of Mr. Roosevelt, gave the President power to authorize the formation of four volunteer divisions. No action was taken to complicate the organization of the National Army by such a superfluous and semi-detached body of irregulars.

The registration, which was, of course, the indispensable first step towards the application of the Act, was carried out on June 5. The total number of "fencible men" liable to the call was 10,000,000. There could be no question of calling out such an unwieldy multitude. In point of fact, lack of officers to give the needful training, of equipment, and of quarters for the soldiers when raised, made it doubtful whether as many as 500,000 could be embarked before the autumn of 1917. There were many who doubted whether it would be possible for the United States to put a substantial force into the field before the spring of 1919. But the old adage which says that "where there is a will, there is a way", is peculiarly true in the United States. Much, very much, more than cautious observers thought likely to be done, was not only undertaken, but carried out—and that very well—in a much shorter time.

While the first tentative steps were being taken in the great task of creating an army on a European scale, another and an indispensable duty

could be tackled at once. Money must be provided in quantities proportionate to the expenses to be met. Mr. Wilson's adviser in financial affairs was Mr. William P. M'Adoo, Secretary of the Treasury. On his suggestion the President sent a Bill

the States from Europe since the war began.

The payments from the Old World had otherwise helped to equip the States for war. They had not been made only for raw materials and food, but also largely for munitions, and



The Massing of the United States Army: an American division leaving New York for training

to Congress to authorize the raising of \$7,000,000,000 (£1,400,000,000). It was provided that \$3,000,000,000 (£600,000,000) might be lent to the Allies at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, the rate of interest at which the money was to be raised in America. There could be no difficulty in effecting this arrangement, if only because vast quantities of money had been pouring into

towards the construction of ships. It was known that 2,000,000 tons of shipping had been contracted for with American yards. This flood of capital had had a great influence in stimulating the development of munition factories and shipbuilding yards. The instruments of production, created in response to a European demand, remained to be made available for

the service of America. On the shipping side the States were not yet, and could not for an interval be, ready to provide their own service of transport. They had to rely on European, and particularly on British, help. The effect produced by the war on the shipping, and therefore on the sea-borne commerce of the world, can only be mentioned here in passing. But it is appropriate to record that ships then under construction for foreign account were taken over by America, and it was understood that they would be retained as a national asset. European Governments were prompt to see the necessity for the closest co-operation with Washington. Special missions of the proportion and dignity required by the circumstances were at once dispatched. Mr. Balfour, who, as stated in our last chapter on the subject, brought with him a large naval, military, and economic staff, was the first to reach America (April 22). Marshal Joffre and M. Viviani, who came on behalf of France, soon followed, and after them Prince Udine, as representative of Italy. The part they all played in the diplomacy of the war—a great and instructive subject, which will in time find its historians—was of vital importance; but the most immediate influence was exercised by Marshal Joffre.

The former French Commander-in-Chief was the bearer of a message and an appeal to which the President and his advisers could not be otherwise than responsive. He was authorized to impress upon them the weighty truth that France was heavily burdened. Losses of dead, of men

crippled, and of prisoners of war had strained her resources to the utmost. The early arrival of even a comparatively small reinforcement from America would be a most welcome relief. The moral effect of the presence of American soldiers on French soil, as a guarantee and earnest of more to come, would be no less valuable than the material aid. Such an appeal, made by so distinguished a spokesman, could not fail to have its effect on the views of the Government at Washington. To wait till a great army could be fully prepared might look the more effective course on paper. In the urgency of the circumstances any appearance of delay would have been most unwise. Therefore the American Government took the no less judicious than honourable decision to dispatch what troops it had then under its hand at once. The first body of American troops landed in France on June 26. The officer to whom the arduous honour of commanding the American army in Europe was entrusted preceded his troops by some three weeks. He was in London on June 6.

General John J. Pershing, who was universally recognized as the most fit man for the post, was fifty-six years of age when he took up his command. Like other officers of the United States regular army (with rare exceptions) he had received his training at the famous military college at West Point. It had been his fortune to share in all the forms of active service which had been open to an American officer since the close of the War of Secession. He accompanied the ex-

pedition to Cuba, and had so distinguished himself in the Philippines during the operations which were required to subdue the native leader, Aguinaldo, that he had been rapidly promoted to Brigadier-General by Mr. Roosevelt.

An American officer has always to serve in the Indian territories and in the trying work of watching the turbulent Mexican frontier. On this scene General Pershing had been engaged, at first as second in command under General Tunston, in a most thankless task. The expedition which was allowed to cross the frontier for the purpose of punishing the notorious Mexican agitator Villa had been required to abate the nuisance without being allowed to take effectual measures of repression. General Pershing had performed his duty, so far as performance was possible, when only half-measures were authorized, in a way to earn the confidence of his fellow-soldiers and of Mr. Wilson. He was known to have long looked forward to a collision with the restless and aggressive power of Germany as inevitable.

As was but natural, the troops for the European front had been forestalled by the naval forces of the States. A flotilla of United States destroyers, commanded by Admiral Mayo, had joined the British naval forces under Sir David Beatty in May, and had been gladly welcomed. But it must be noted once more that help was not most needed on the naval side.

The case was very different with the division of American regular soldiers,

the detachment of marines, and the nine regiments of engineers which landed on June 26 in France. They were not the first Americans who had taken part in the war. Volunteers from the States had accompanied our own reinforcements from Canada,



General John J. Pershing, commanding the United States Army on the Western Front
(From a photograph by Russell & Sons)

while others were already serving with the French, some as airmen, but more with the Red Cross. These voluntary forerunners of the national corps were later drafted into their own native service. The first-comers of the American army were not numerous as modern armies go, though they amounted to more men than the Duke of Wellington ever saw collected in one place of British nationality. The

carefully-selected infantry division sent by the President numbered at the outside 25,000, and with the marines and engineers the total was about 30,000.

The bare fact that the fleet of transports which brought the American vanguard to France could make the voyage without loss was in itself a

in the North Atlantic, which already existed and became more pressing when troops in large numbers had to be carried, entailed the withdrawal of the British flag from distant seas. The vessels obtained at that cost passed and repassed in spite of all the hostile submarines could do. Only a little more than 1000 American soldiers,



With the Stars and Stripes in France: American troops standing to attention as the flag passes

success for the Allies. In June of 1917 the submarine campaign was in full swing. Germany was relying partly on the difficulty that would be found in providing transports for the newcomers, but more on the destruction which the underwater craft were to inflict, to prevent the reinforcement of the British and French troops on the Western Front from the other side of the Atlantic. Yet the transports were found, at a sacrifice it is true. The necessity for concentrating tonnage

out of more than a million who came to Europe, were lost by enemy action at sea.

Those who landed on June 26, 1917, were already trained men who required only a little rest after their voyage, and a short interval of training in work which had not hitherto come within the experience of American soldiers, to be fit to take their place in the fighting-line. In the conditions prevailing in America soldiers usually acted in small bodies, and against

irregulars or savages. Movement in large masses, and the construction, defence, or attack on trenches held by disciplined enemies abundantly armed with artillery, were unfamiliar to them. Yet the first detachments of regulars had comparatively little to learn.

In estimating the scope of the effort made by the United States we must not fail to allow for the dominating fact that the numerous force which was in the field by the spring of 1918 had to be raised from the beginning after war had been declared. The registration of men liable for service under the Draft Act already mentioned was held just about the time that General Pershing and his staff left America. The work of drawing the conscripts had not yet started when General Pershing, coming by way of London, landed at Boulogne on June 13, 1917, a fortnight before the expedition arrived. It was then calculated that the next contribution, composed of incorporated National Guards, and numbering 100,000, would be landed in the autumn of the same year, and that about as many more would follow in the winter. The National Guards were an already embodied force, and therefore promptly available. The first quota of conscription men were not called up and sent into camps all over the country for training till September 5. By October a million and a half of men were in arms, but they had to be taught from the beginning, and it was first necessary to teach the officers, by whom the instruction was to be given to the men.

Soldiers from the standing army could be drawn to receive commissions, but the ranks would have been depleted if the whole staff of officers had been sought in that quarter, when an army estimated to consist of 1,350,000 men was to be formed. To get the men under the operation of a Draft Act in a country where those of military age (twenty-one to thirty) were ten millions was easy. Time was required to impart the minimum of needful instruction. No time was wasted. On May 11, 5000 volunteers collected at Plattsburg in the officers' training-camp. Commissions were granted to 3500 on August 14, in four months; so that they were just in time to take the first drafts in hand at the close of the month and the beginning of September. The number was manifestly far from sufficient. When the work of raising the army was in full swing there were twenty-two camps of instruction for officers, and four for the medical staff, along with the thirty-two cantonments rapidly created on waste and unoccupied land. What was begun in America had to be completed in Europe. So fast as men were embodied, and had been taught the first elements, they were carried to France.

The transport of men was not all. In view of the much-diminished output of food in France—which could in no case do more than feed itself—and indeed in all Europe, a condition was created so amply, not to say painfully, familiar to us all that there is no need to insist on it. There was an absolute necessity that not only the men, but the food they were to eat, should be

sent from America. What was necessary was done without fail, without even a hitch. Something will have to be said of the methods adopted and of the managing men by whom the task was performed. But before going on to that part of our subject it will be best to complete the story of the collecting of the American army by the spring of 1918.

In view of what has just been said it will be obvious that the greater, and the most essential, part of the training given to the American troops before they were in a state to meet the enemy was received in France; and it will be hardly less manifest that it was largely given by the French. The American commanders, being in French territory as allies, were bound to act with the native authorities, military and civil. It was a matter of course that the railways should remain under French control—which was new in its ways to Americans, and not congenial to them. It was noted that the Americans conformed cheerfully to the novelty and adapted themselves rapidly to the rules of their hosts.

In the circumstances, too, it was a matter of course that French instruction should be necessary, considering the very slight experience which any American could have acquired of the duties now to be performed. Their officers attended the training-schools, both French and British, which placed all possible aid at their disposal. In spite of the facilities which were afforded by the possession of a common language, the share of the French in all this training was larger than the British. The

disposition of the troops of all nations, which would naturally in the larger number of cases bring the Americans into closer proximity to the French, had its influence. It may even be the case that the tradition of the War of Independence, and the part played in it by Lafayette and other French officers, predisposed the Americans to accept French training. The relations between them and the British officers were of the most friendly character. The British superior command was, of course, well represented at General Pershing's Head-quarters. American officers showed a perfect readiness to go through courses of instruction under British direction.

The men were as a rule very young. There was a sprinkling of veterans who had served in Cuba, and the Philippines, but the age limit imposed by the Draft Act excluded men of between thirty and forty, or of over forty, who now formed a large proportion of all fully embodied European armies. As the number of those liable to be summoned was so large, America came into the war with many advantages. There could be no question of calling out the whole ten millions of military age. The proposal was, in fact, to take not much more than a tenth part of the ten. Therefore it was possible to select the most fit in physique and temperament.

And in another way the abundance of the resources in men allowed the United States to meet the call for material of all kinds with comparative ease. There was no need in America to deplete fields and factories of work-

ing hands—a consideration of the first importance at a time when French industry was paralysed because the most productive districts were in possession of the invader, and its agriculture was suffering from lack of labour,

and was able to give a most valuable return for whatever aid in training we might need. American ambulance and Red Cross parties had been known at the seat of war from the beginning. When the States came into the con-



A New Chapter of History: American troops marching along Piccadilly to salute, and be saluted by, King George at Buckingham Palace on their way to embark for active service in France

and when Great Britain had confessedly reached the limits of its power to turn out munitions, and was hard put to it to keep its manufacturing industries—other than those working for the armies—alive even on a reduced scale.

In one most essential part of the organization of great armies in the field America had nothing to learn,

flict they took a foremost part at once in staffing and working the hospitals. While their troops were but beginning to collect, their medical service was already affording invaluable relief to the other allies. In June 1917, 2000 officers and other ranks of the United States Army Medical Service were at work in the British war zone, and had taken over six big base hospitals.

Wherever the Americans were to be seen at work they were found to be alert, adaptable, eager to learn, and good humoured.

Though the bulk of the American troops went directly to France, they were not unrepresented in Great Britain. Few incidents in the whole course of the war were more significant, more truly picturesque, than the march through London on August 15 of a regiment of 2700 strong under the command of Colonel Whitman and Lieutenant-Colonel Wagner. It was the more effective because it came as something of a surprise. The authorities had thought it better to make no early announcement. But, although the suddenness of the event tended rather to keep down the number of the spectators, the crowd which collected to look on was large and enthusiastic. The Americans, who came on the invitation of the King, which was directed in facsimile copies to each of them, reached Waterloo Station early in the morning, and marched by Westminster Bridge and Birdcage Walk to Wellington Barracks. The march from the barracks and back again went past Buckingham Palace, where the King stood to receive and return the salute. No more significant proof could have been given of the thoroughness with which Germany had banded all the world against her, than the fact that an American regiment, displaying the Stars and Stripes, and at one moment moving to the strains of "The Boston Tea Party", should march through the west-end of London to be saluted by the King. It was no idle ceremony,

but the outward and visible sign of a national conviction, felt on both sides of the Atlantic, that the common interests of the English-speaking peoples were assailed, and that they must unite in their own defence.

The march past almost coincided with the publication in America of a report drawn up by the Committee of Public Information which performed the functions of a censorship, of less extended powers than our own, under the chairmanship of Mr. George Creel. The document was officially described as "the most important revelation of Germany's lawless depredations and spying in America that has been made since the first declaration of war, 1914". If we could treat the report without regard to the malignity of intention which it reveals, we could fairly say that the picture it exhibits is comic. In an earlier chapter on the entry of the United States into the war some details were given of German intrigues. It was shown then that a number of agents, who thought themselves clever because they were unscrupulous, Captain von Papen and others, had in fact been absurdly victimized by people much cleverer than themselves, of whom they supposed they were making use. The further revelations of September 20, 1917, seem on the whole to tell the same story. We make the acquaintance of a certain Wolf von Igel, who appears as the centre of a spider's web of artful plotting. The American judicial authorities have been able to discover what he was trying to do. His activities make a formidable list in the judicial report.

"I. The violation of the laws of the United States.

"II. The destruction of lives and property on merchant vessels on the high seas.

"III. Irish revolutionary plots against Great Britain.

"IV. Fomenting ill feeling against the United States in Mexico.

"V. Subvention of American writers as lecturers.

"VI. Financing propaganda.

"VII. The maintenance of a spy system under the guise of a Commercial Investigation Bureau.

"VIII. Subsidizing the bureau for the purpose of stirring up labour troubles in munition plants.

"IX. A bomb industry, and other related activities."

The evidence that he was busy trying to do mischief in these diverse ways was secured when the pretended advertising agency kept by Herr Wolf von Igel at 60 Wall Street was raided by the New York police in April, 1916. It was characteristic of German methods that Igel took the most effectual way of arousing suspicion when he opened an office which must soon be seen not to serve the purpose for which it was supposed to exist, and was frequented by persons who had no discoverable business, and also that he accumulated an armful of incriminating documents. When we examine the evidence in order to discover what Igel actually did, we find little more than a chronicle of small beer. That the German Government paid money through him for services to be received is obvious enough. The question is what it got for its money. As far as can be seen, what it secured was—the service, more

or less well remunerated, of Herr Wolf von Igel. Lectures were delivered for pay. Irish revolutionary schemes were talked about and more pay was given. Vague persons came to and fro with schemes for putting bombs disguised as lumps of coal into the bunkers of merchant ships, and they pocketed still more money. What came of it all except payments by secret agents who were duped, or were duping their own Government, and money received by cheats, is not apparent. The malignity of the intention is manifest enough. But if the report does give us a "Satan's Invisible World Displayed", it must be allowed that the fiends were utterly futile. Mr. Lansing published independently an instance of German intrigue which was perfectly calculated to cause the most just offence. It was in the form of a message sent to Berlin by Count Bernstorff while he was ambassador in Washington, and dated January 22, 1917.

"I request authority to pay out up to \$50,000 (£10,000), in order, as on former occasions, to influence Congress through the organization you know of which can perhaps prevent war. I am beginning in the meantime to act accordingly."

Count Bernstorff had every reason to be grateful for the moderation of the American Government. He forfeited his immunity as an ambassador when he entered into schemes for interfering with the government of the country to which he was accredited. That the ambassador and the spies of Herr Wolf von Igel did nothing except show how unscrupulous persons

may be the dupes of their own craft does not in the least reduce the offensiveness of their conduct.

We find a very different scene when we turn from the cobweb plots of German agents to the open and effectual action of the United States Government. It had to find the organization needed for carrying on a war which



Mr. Hoover, United States Food Controller

it had had no cause, until very recently, to foresee, and for which it was naturally not yet adapted. New organs had to be created to meet new needs. The superiority of a people trained to self-government and voluntary action over a hard-and-fast-bound bureaucracy was soon conspicuous.

America was indeed already provided with a Council of National Defence—composed of D. F. Houston (Agriculture), Josephus Daniels (Navy), Newton D. Baker (War),

Franklin K. Lane (Interior), W. B. Wilson (Labour), Grosvenor B. Clarke (Secretary of the Council), Julius Rosenwald (Chairman of Supplies), Bernard K. Baruch (Raw Materials), D. Willard (Transportation), Dr. F. H. Martin (Medicine and Sanitation), Dr. H. Godfrey (Research), Howard Coffin (Munitions), and W. S. Gifford (Director of the Council). But this body was advisory, and when war came executive action was indispensable. After consultation with the European missions the Council was developed to meet the needs of the time, but it became a "Great Council" of 1000 members. The number would have been altogether too unwieldy for work if functions had not been distinguished, and if particular men had not been appointed to special work. Mr. Bernard M. Baruch, of Spanish or Portuguese Jew descent, became the U.S. official Purchaser of Raw Materials. He was already well known in Wall Street as a man of business. The training was the best he could have had, since his duty was to see to it that the Government bought in the best market, and at the most favourable rate possible.

With Mr. Baruch was associated Mr. Rosenwald, also a Jew expert from Chicago, and his special duty was to superintend the provision of supplies for the army and navy. But Mr. Rosenwald had a colleague in this work whose name was to be much heard—Mr. Coffin, organizer of Munitions and Aeroplane Production. The munition part of the task was really controlled by Mr. Frank

Scott, a man of business from the Middle West. Mr. Coffin, who in his private capacity was a motor manufacturer, devoted himself to developing the aeroplane service and resources of the Republic. Here also the United States had to begin near the beginning. There was not at the time such a development of aeroplane manufacture as allowed of large immediate production. It was necessary to create before it was possible to organize.

Pretty much the same statement has to be made in regard to another and truly most important part of the creative activity demanded from the United States Government—the shipping. There were yards, and they had been much stimulated by foreign demand, but what was felt to be necessary now was a common national effort. A body with a rather cumbersome name, “The United States Shipping Board Emergency Corporation”, was called into existence to meet the need. General Goethals, the builder of the Panama Canal, was selected by the President as its head. The results of the Board’s labours were delayed. Experts, as does occasionally happen, could not agree. Mr. Denman, Chairman of the existing Shipping Board, was in favour of wood as the material of which the new ships were to be built. General Goethals preferred steel. It would not be rash to assume that each was supported by those from whom the material was to be bought. Public opinion appears to have been in favour of General Goethals, and so were many, even most, experts. But a

decision was not reached at once, and the construction of the 3,000,000 tons, which were to have been taken in hand, in addition to the 2,000,000 already building, and to have been completed in eighteen months, was delayed.

The name best known in Europe, among those of men who were adapting the United States to the conditions of war, was Mr. Hoover. He was already familiar in connection with the Belgian Relief Committee. Mr. Hoover was not a member of the National Council, and was specially selected by the President for the post of Food Controller. The place was one of peculiar difficulty, as will be obvious to all who reflect that the supply of food, not only to American armies in Europe but to Europe itself, had now become a Government task in the United States. Food had to be collected, brought to the coast, shipped, and distributed so as to make the most of all supplies.

The undertaking was enormous and complicated. It implied, in the first place, that the people of the United States, who, thanks to the old-standing prosperity of their country, had grown profuse in their habits, should consent to limit themselves. They were not, it is true, called upon to endure the restrictions which had been forced on Europe, even in the most fortunate regions in it, and had been exceptionally severe in some neutral countries. But they were asked to diminish the waste which had become habitual to a people which could allow itself a large margin. The American railways, too, were overtaxed at first. There was

even a good deal of confusion in early days over the collection and delivery of the supply. The aid of Mr. Daniel Willard, President of the Baltimore and Ohio systems, and Transportation member of the National Council, was indispensable to Mr. Hoover. Whatever friction, or even confusion, there may have been was soon overcome. The essential fact is that the work, which was taken in hand on a sudden call, was done, if not without delay, at least without such delay as maimed the performance.

When the National Council contained after a time no less than a thousand names, and when the work to be done was of infinite complexity and variety, it is manifestly impossible to be exhaustive in an account of the total effort. The utmost we can hope to achieve now is to name the main points and to sketch largely the nature of the effort. It will be seen that when the United States put her hands to the plough they were not idly used. Money was advanced, and that was easy enough. Men were raised, and that was not difficult. But to organize, to train, to turn a multitude of unpractised men into the soldiers who were to prove themselves fit to encounter and defeat the carefully and long prepared, and, moreover, war-hardened soldiers of Germany in the

spring of 1918; to evolve new departments of administration; to make food available and to secure its distribution so that the best could be made of it—these were great feats. It nowise detracts from the Americans who had to administer behind the armies, that they had the experience of France and Great Britain to guide them. The capacity to learn from the experience of others, and to adapt foreign examples to different conditions, has been found to be very rare in the history of mankind.

While it was still in process of formation, the American army could not take a foremost part in the actual fighting. American units were indeed brigaded, mostly with the French, and took their share in such fighting as there was. It is to be observed that the period of formation coincided with the interval during which the Germans were withdrawing the troops set free on their eastern frontier by the collapse of Russia, and were transferring them to the Western Front in preparation for their great offensive in March, 1918. About that time the number of Americans actually present and ready for service had grown to 500,000, and their opportunity came for showing that they were a deciding element in the victory of the Allies.

D. H.

CHAPTER V

THE FOURTH YEAR OF THE WAR

(August, 1917—August, 1918)

General War Situation—A Test of Endurance—The Burden—War Office Undertakings—Munitions and the Appeal to the Makers—Exports and Imports—Mr. Bonar Law's Budget, 1918—The War Bonds—The Thanks of Parliament to the Services—Man Power—Industry and Merchant Shipping—Rationing.

WHEN we try to sum up the general character of the war during the fourth year of its progress, we may define it as having been in the main a test of the respective powers of endurance of the combatants. The collapse of Russia, and her withdrawal from the ranks of active combatants, gave Germany for a time some superiority on the vital Western Front. Here, as described in the preceding chapters, the struggle swayed to and fro.

At sea the case was essentially the same as on land. It was not found possible to put a stop to the depredations of the German submarines. Yet they were never allowed to reach the point at which they actually suspended the trade of the Allies, and as the year advanced their successes diminished, and their failure increased. The details of these operations cannot be dealt with here. We can note only that the trial was one of endurance. In April, 1918, when the last great crisis was coming to its height, Mr. Lloyd George stated the truth with unquestionable accuracy when he said that we must still be prepared to make fresh sacrifices, when he appealed to the Dominions for further help, and when he declared that in

this trial of strength, the last man might count. He did not hesitate to make a public statement, both of the gravity of the situation and the reliance of the European Allies on the aid of the United States. On March 27 Lord Reading was entertained at a public dinner in New York, given in his honour as special ambassador from the British Empire. On this occasion he read a message from the Prime Minister to the American people, which stated the case with force and lucidity.

"We are in the crisis of the war. Attacked by an immense superiority of German troops our army has been forced to retire. The retirement has been carried out methodically before the pressure of a steady succession of German reserves which are suffering enormous losses. The situation is being faced with splendid courage and resolution. The dogged pluck of our troops has, for the moment, checked the ceaseless onrush of the enemy, and the French have joined in the struggle, but this battle, the greatest and most momentous in the history of the world, is only just beginning.

"Throughout it the French and British are buoyed with the knowledge that the great Republic of the West will neglect no effort which can hasten its troops and ships to Europe. In war, time is vital. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of

getting American reinforcements across the Atlantic in the shortest possible space of time."

Under the strain of the great German attack in the spring, it was found that we could no longer suffer the enemy to retain the incalculable advantage of fighting as one army directed by a single will. Therefore, with the cordial co-operation of all the governments concerned, General Foch, who held the command of the French army, was appointed to co-ordinate the action of the Allied armies on the Western Front. With the advantage of unity of command, backed up by the loyal determination of the peoples to make all the necessary sacrifices, the last desperate efforts of the Germans to grasp a final superiority were defeated.

Where victory was to come to those who could endure longest, the whole population of every belligerent state was called on to share in the sufferings of war in a way unknown to former generations. Their daily lives were affected everywhere. For those who were not actually combatants the war meant a pressure of work, or a loss of conveniences, or, what was incomparably worse, a restriction on their ability to obtain necessities. We must no doubt be careful to abstain from exaggerations. In so far as this country was concerned the sacrifices must on the whole have fallen far short of absolute suffering. When Mr. Bonar Law made his Budget statement on April 4, 1918, he was able to report that the entertainment tax, as levied in the financial year 1917-8,

had returned no less a sum than £5,000,000. A reference to the chapter on the third year of the war¹ will show that this figure, given the rates of the tax, implies an expenditure of a very large sum by the public on mere amusements. A war always brings a vast expenditure which produces a fallacious appearance of abundance. And this has been exceptionally true of the Great World War, with its prodigious outlay of what is in fact capital. The weight of the burden comes to be felt later. On the other hand we may fairly assume that this entertainment tax, large as it looks, was contributed by but a small part of the population. The £5,000,000 returned was perhaps mainly a proof of the extravagance of a class encouraged by a profuse war expenditure. Yet it also shows that there can have been no universal distress.

The speech on the army estimates delivered by Mr. Macpherson on February 20, 1918, will serve as an instructive preface to what has to be said here on the general effect—or prevailing character—of the fourth year of the war. The facts he gave tell their own tale. During the financial year 1917-8, the war office purchased manufactured goods to the value of about £270,000,000, of which £26,000,000 were bought on account of our Allies. The amount of raw material purchased came to about £113,000,000. One of the largest items was preserved meat, which was bought to the value of £12,000,000. The 270,000,000 rations of preserved

¹ See Chapter XIV, Vol. VII.

meat served out to the troops amounted to from two and a half to three times as much as was consumed by the whole nation before the war. Other purchases for immediate consumption were:—

Tea	...	84,000,000 lb.
Sugar	...	177,000,000 lb.
Tins of Milk		145,000,000.

Tobacco, which cannot be looked upon as a mere luxury, but is a soldier's ration, was bought to the extent of 8,500,000 lb. for pipe and chewing, and 11,000,000 lb. of cigarettes. But as men had to be clothed, as well as fed, the war office had to purchase wool textures to an enormous extent i.e. 250,000,000 yards a year. "For every 100 blankets produced for all purposes in a normal year before the war, 250 are now produced for direct government purposes." So Mr. Macpherson told the House, and he added that £88,000,000 were spent on wool alone. The yards of cloth and flannel thus required would go several times round the earth at the Equator. The wool clip of the world, even to the Falkland Islands and Iceland, had been purchased.

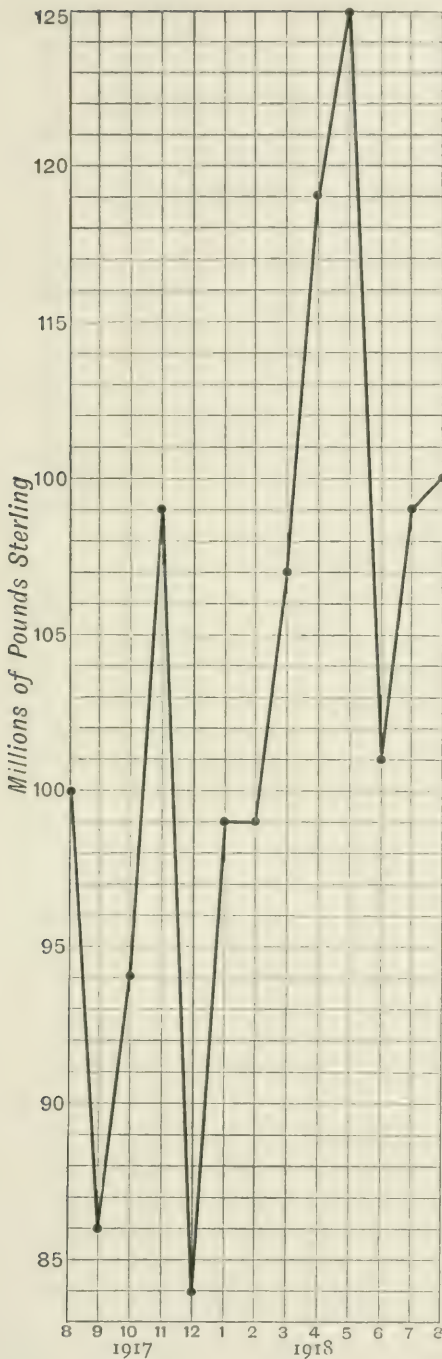
The figures given by Mr. Macpherson vastly exceed those which would have been quoted for similar needs in any former war. Yet they were but a minor part of the needful outlay. Mr. Winston Churchill had to lay before the House of Commons on March 31, 1918, the reasons for a far greater expenditure. Part of the cost of the purchases spoken of by Mr. Macpherson might in time be recovered. But there could be no

possible reimbursement for the expenditure reported by the Ministry of Munitions.

"We have lost very nearly 1000 guns either by shell-fire or capture. Between 4000 and 5000 machine-guns have been lost or destroyed, and a quantity of ammunition, apart from what has been fired, has been lost in dumps, which I may perhaps best express in a manner which will give the information I desire to convey, and at the same time baffle calculation by the enemy, by stating that it amounts to something between one week and three weeks' total manufacture."

Yet so vigorous was the effort made that all the loss had been replaced by the last week in March. More guns were then in complete equipment than when the last great German offensive against the British front began. It was of this phase of the war that Mr. Churchill was speaking. But though these figures were applicable directly to particular circumstances, yet they are true in a greater or less degree of every day of the war. There was always a steady expenditure or loss of ammunition and weapons of war needing to be made good. The effort to meet the demand was the share of the combatants in the prosecution of the war. Mr. Churchill could certify that it was more than sufficient in the early months of 1918. We could, he affirmed, carry on the battle till the winter, and yet not compromise our resources for 1919.

Though the constant call for men to fill gaps in the front had compelled the ministry to part with 100,000 since May of the previous year, and they were going in the rate of 1000 a day



British Imports, August, 1917, to August, 1918, inclusive

in March, 1918, the necessary work had been overtaken. Under the pres-

sure applied by the German offensive the Minister of Munitions made an appeal to the workmen: "I rely upon everyone concerned in the manufacture of munitions to put forward their best efforts. There should be no cessation of work during the Easter holidays." The call was well met. Men and women dispensed with their holidays, and workmen generally responded when asked to enrol as war-munition workers, with the obligation to be liable to be moved from place to place as occasion required. The Minister was able to work with the "Trade-union Advisory Committee". It was a significant fact that more aeroplanes were turned out in one month of 1918 than in the whole of 1916.

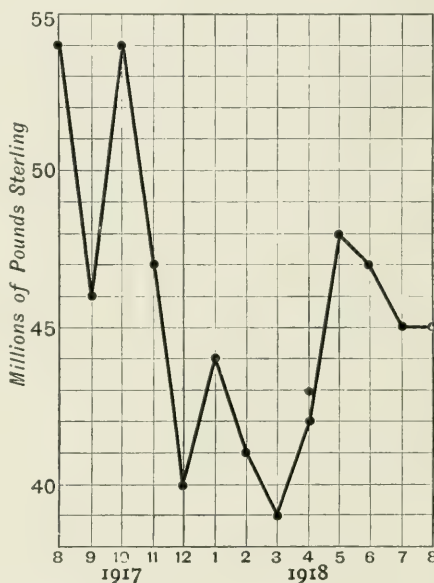
In such general conditions it was but natural that the normal trade of the country should suffer, and that there should be a falling off in the amount and value of our exports. Men were drawn from industry. Industry itself was largely turned to the production of weapons, and of explosives. By a great increase in the employment of women, by suspending the easier methods of peace, and replacing old methods by new ones, British industry made a fine struggle and suffered less than might well have been expected. Yet it did suffer. A reference to the diagram of British exports shows that they fell from £55,000,000 at the end of July, 1917, to £45,000,000 odd at the end of August, 1918. During the same period our imports rose from £100,000,000 to £110,000,000. Between those two dates, and the end of May, 1918, they had reached the enormous figures of £125,000,000.

In that month the exports were £48,000,000.

The raising of money is the most conspicuous sign of a national effort. Mr. Bonar Law's budget statement of April 22, 1918, dealt with figures on a truly colossal scale, and at a length which forbids entire quotation. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had to provide for a total expenditure during the financial year 1918-9 of £2,972,197,000. The revenue on the existing basis was £774,250,000. The new taxes he intended to impose were estimated to return £67,800,000. The revenue he could rely on was therefore £842,050,000, which would leave a balance to be raised by loan of £2,130,147,000. The revenue for the financial year 1917-8 had been elastic. Excess profits had yielded £20,000,000 over the estimate; controlled firms £30,000,000; the income and super tax £15,000,000. These were the main items, but the lesser imposts, such as entertainments, tobacco, and miscellaneous, all showed excesses, while India had contributed £35,000,000 as against an expected £10,000,000. Mr. Bonar Law was therefore well justified in looking forward to a good return from the additions he was about to make.

He did not (to the disappointment of a few members, who fixed their attention entirely on the much-abused profiteer) propose to raise the level of the Excess Profit Tax. He was content to keep a better watch on "leakages", which meant evasions. The new burdens began with the Post Office. The minimum charge on letters for home and the United

States was fixed at $1\frac{1}{2}d.$, and for post-cards, $1d.$ This he calculated would return an addition of £4,000,000. Cheques were to be charged with an extra stamp of $1d.$, which could be calculated to return £1,000,000. Income Tax, the great stand-by of all Chancellors of the Exchequer, was raised to 6s. in the £, but no change



British Exports, August, 1917, to August, 1918, inclusive

was to be made in the case of incomes under £500. The product of the increase in the rate was put at £41,400,000. Slight rebates were allowed for married men, and for those who had the charge of dependents when their incomes were less than £800 a year. The Super Tax was raised to 4s. in the £, and was to begin at incomes of £2500. The increase was relied on to supply £14,150,000. When Income Tax and Super Tax are taken together, all who had £3000 a year would pay

6s. 5*d.* in the £; at £5000 the rate would be 7s. 2*d.* in the £; at £10,000 8s. 4*d.* in the £; and at £20,000 it would be 9s. 5*d.*

While all who can be described as rich were thus called upon to give from rather over a quarter to all but one-half of their incomes, the farmers, who, in the opinion of many critics, had hitherto escaped lightly, were to pay income tax, not, as hitherto, on once the rent they paid, but on twice. This was estimated to add £5,300,000 to the national revenue. Additional imposts were laid on spirits—30s. a gallon in lieu of 14s. 9*d.* (to yield £11,150,000); beer, 50s. a barrel in place of 25s. (to yield £15,700,000); tobacco was to pay an extra 2*d.* the ounce, and to yield £5,500,000 more; while the tax duty on sugar was raised by 11s. 8*d.* per hundredweight—this would mean 1¼*d.* per head on the fortnight's ration, and amount to £16,200,000. Beyond all this Mr. Bonar Law provided for another way of making the public contribute to the war.

The total outlay on navy, army, munitions, and air service for the financial year 1917-8 was given as £1,560,000,000, and Mr. Bonar Law estimated that the figure for 1918-9 would be £1,861,000,000. The public was somewhat disappointed to learn that the generous aid granted by the United States had not diminished the amount of our contribution to the expenses of the Allies. The States had advanced to us £950,000,000; of this sum £505,000,000 had been passed on to the Allies. Our outlay was inflated by the fact that we borrowed with one hand only to pass on with the other.

Mr. Bonar Law did not feel justified in counting on the repayment of more than half of our advances to Allies. He expressed his confidence that, when Russia did at last settle down, the new government, or the new governments, which were to arise out of the ruins of the Tsardom, would find themselves obliged to regulate their financial relations with creditors. But in that quarter the future was very obscure, and it was not rational to attempt to ignore the fact that the dominant Bolsheviks had emphatically repudiated all responsibility for the obligations incurred by the Tsar's Government.

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer had done all he felt that he could safely do in the way of new taxation to meet the daily calls of the war, without trenching too far on the fund needed in order to carry on the business of the country, it was still found necessary to seek vast sums by loan. The method of raising large loans adopted, to begin with, by ourselves, and always by Germany and other states, and the use of Treasury Bills to meet current needs, were services fit for use in normal times. But when constantly employed they led to inflation, and the necessity for perpetual repayments of Treasury Bills gave an air of instability to our finance. At a great meeting held in the Albert Hall on October 22, 1917, to promote national economy, at which Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, and General Smuts spoke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer explained and justified the decision of the Government to set up what may be called a perpetual sale

of War Bonds, each for 15s. 3d. "We have issued these War Bonds," so Mr. Bonar Law said, "I won't say with the intention, but in the hope that the money may come in indefinitely, week by week, which will enable us to go on with the war." If a constant supply could be obtained thus, not only would the air of instability inseparable from an abuse of Treasury Bills be avoided, but economy would be promoted, since small sums, which might otherwise have been frittered away in careless outlay on frivolities, would in all probability be turned to the service of the war by the purchase of excellent securities, each of which would in time be worth one pound, and would, in the interval, bear interest. The Bonds could be purchased in small quantities at Post Offices, or at what may be termed booths, opened in central spots, or taken round the country on tour. The popular "Tank" was chosen to do service as a booth, and became abundantly familiar to the public. It could not but be the case that the bulk of the money thus raised came from capitalists and wealthy associations. But the public bought largely in small sums, and the evils which Mr. Bonar Law had noted as following from the old method were avoided.

Another and a graceful innovation on ancient usages was made by the Government on October 29, 1917. It had always been the practice for Parliament to give the thanks of the nation to the forces engaged in a war. But though special compliments had often been made to individual admirals or generals, to fleets or armies,

for particular services, the comprehensive recognition had been wont to be left to the end of a war. The circumstances were, however, now so different, that it was judged right to forestall the ceremony. Therefore the thanks of the nation were formally given by Lord Curzon in the House of Lords, and Mr. Lloyd George in the Commons, while the war was still raging, and the end was to the knowledge of all still far off. A comparison between their speeches, and those made by their predecessors on similar occasions, affords a striking proof of the immense extension of the operations of war in modern times—not so much in the space over which they are conducted (the Seven Years War of 1756–63 raged from the Philippines to Canada), but in respect to the multiplicity and variety of the classes of men engaged and the weapons used. The most comprehensive survey was given by Mr. Lloyd George in the Commons. In words always well chosen, and often eloquent, the Prime Minister tendered the thanks of the nation to

"The officers, petty officers, and men of the navy for their faithful watch on the seas during 'three years of ceaseless danger and stress' against 'a barbarous foe'.

"The officers, non-commissioned officers, and men of the British armies in the field, the women in the medical service and the service itself, and all auxiliary services, for 'unfailing courage and endurance' amid difficulties and hardships endured to 'achieve the liberty of the world'.

"To all Dominions overseas, to India and the Crown colonies, whence men had come thousands of miles to fight for 'human freedom'.

"To the officers and men of the mercantile service for devotion to duty in carrying vital supplies.

"To all these, so his address ran, 'this House doth acknowledge with grateful admiration the valour and devotion of those who have offered their lives in the service of their country, and tenders its sympathy to near relatives and friends in the sorrow they have endured'."

In the speech in which Mr. Lloyd George amplified and illustrated these ceremonial words, he quoted the most signal examples of the good work done. The navy had carried, and had covered the passage of 13,000,000 men, 2,000,000 horses, 25,000,000 tons of explosives and other supplies, together with 51,000,000 tons of coal or oil fuel. It had lost the lives of only 2500 of the men entrusted to its care. In this work the mercantile seamen had had a great share. The fishermen had worked much and well in the perilous duty of laying or removing mines. He recorded how the old army had been "the army which gathered the spears of the Prussian legions into its breast and in perishing saved Europe". One division of 12,000 men had been reduced to 3000. Of 400 officers who took part in one battle, only 50 were left. And then the Prime Minister gave due praise to the Territorials, who, during the dreary winter and spring of 1914 and 1915, took the place of those of the old army who had fallen; and went on to salute the new armies which occupied the battle front from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf. He ended with warm acknowledgments and expressions of gratitude to the commanders, the medical service, and the air service—that cavalry of

the clouds. Mr. Asquith followed with a brief and finely worded speech ending in a touching threnody for the dead.

"We who remain behind, impoverished by their loss, are yet enriched by their example. Let it not be said, when the judgment of history comes to be recorded, that they gave their lives in vain."

The measures necessary to maintain the British army at the adequate strength in numbers imposed another and a heavier burden than the supply of money. Already in 1917 the Government had been driven to apply compulsion with increased severity. In April, 1917, the Government passed "An Act to enable the exception from Military Service of men excepted on the ground of previous rejection, or the previous relinquishment of, or discharge from, Naval or Military Service, or unsuitability for Foreign Service, to be reviewed". It empowered the Army Council to give notice to an excepted man to present himself for re-examination at any time not less than fourteen days after the date of notice, when he had been accepted as:

"(a) A member of the territorial forces who is, in the opinion of the Army Council, not suited for foreign service; and

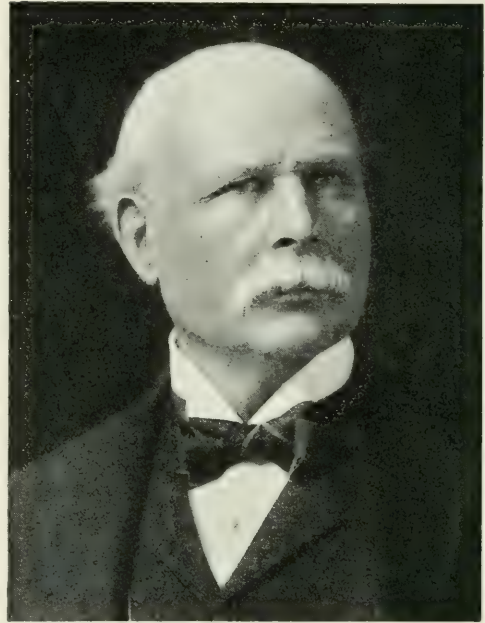
"(b) A man (in this Act referred to as a disabled man) who has left or been discharged from the naval or military service of the Crown in consequence of disablement or ill health (including an officer who has ceased to hold a commission in consequence of disablement or ill health); and

"(c) A man who has been previously rejected on any ground, either after offering himself for enlistment or after becoming subject to the Military Service Act 1916."

Exemptions were granted to men engaged in agriculture, or "work of national importance". In July was passed "The Military Service (Conventions with Allied States) Act", by which it was provided that British subjects resident abroad, or subjects of Allied States living in the United Kingdom, could be called upon to choose between serving in the country of their residence or in that of their allegiance. The recall of the excepted men could not pass without provoking much disappointment and more or less angry comment. The Bill was fiercely criticized in the House of Commons, and suffered some modification in detail. But the need for men was great, and was increasing. Mr. Bonar Law told the House plainly that more soldiers must be found. The number of recruits actually obtained had failed to reach the hoped-for amount by no less than 100,000 men. Indeed, from October, 1916, onwards, the pressure grew ever more severe. In December, 1916, stringent measures were taken to effect what was called, more forcibly than elegantly, a "combing out" of offices and industries. It was decided to call out all men under 26, while the War Office and the Admiralty united to spare all subordinates of less than 31 years of age. The measures finally taken were far more stringent. The new Military Service Bill, introduced on April 9, 1918, provided for taking all healthy men under twenty-five from government offices, and raised the limit of age to fifty, and even in the case of medical men fifty-five. The Bill was passed on the 18th.

When we turn from events and

measures, financial and political, which show the working of governments, and look at the daily lives of humbler people whose fortunes were yet most deeply influenced by the war, we are met by a cloud of novelties imposed, at any rate in so far as the British Empire was concerned, for the first time. In all wars, the daily life of the



Lord Devonport, First Food Controller (December, 1916-May, 1917)

(From a photograph by Elliott & Fry)

people was more or less affected by a state of war. But it had never happened that this country had been placed in the position of "a beleaguered city". It was so now, not only, not even chiefly, through the action of the German submarines, but because the necessity for subordinating the general doings and all the resources of industry to the prosecution of the war rendered special measures of restriction unavoidable. When so much tonnage

was taken up for the purposes detailed by Mr. Macpherson and Mr. Churchill, all had to be subjected to a form of the control imposed on the inhabitants of a besieged town. Necessity had, in fact, driven the Government, and would have forced any administration, to depart from ancient ways in 1917. The case of shipping is a conspicuous example. When the third year of the war drew to its close the position of our merchant shipping was as follows:¹ Except for a few indispensable vessels left for the use of the Colonies and India, or chartered to France and Italy, the Government had requisitioned nearly the whole of the national tonnage engaged in ocean voyages. All liners, and 97 per cent of tramp steamers, had been taken at Government rates. Whatever difference there might be between those rates and market rates would accrue to the Government, which, of course, must be understood to represent a national interest. Whatever might be gained in this way would be available to meet charges which would otherwise have been provided for by loan or taxes.

As merchant shipping is the main instrument in the practice and development of our national industries, the fall in the amount available for all purposes, due to the excess of destruction over building, the allocation of a large part to the purposes of the war, and the concentration of what was left free for trade—namely, a bare half of 14,000,000 tons—on the work of carrying food and other necessities, had

certain inevitable effects on commerce and industry.

The conditions of the third year were, if anything, intensified in the fourth. Though the loss of tonnage from submarine attack was steadily reduced as the war drew to its close, yet the balance never ceased to be against this country. More was lost than was constructed, to the very end. At the same time the call on our shipping was increased by the necessity for providing transport for American troops, and the stores sent out for them from the States. There was nothing for it but to regulate the distribution of necessities among the civil population so that they would receive the indispensable minimum of what was required to keep them in health and capable of work. The distribution of food might have been left to be settled by competition. But in that case it was certain that prices would have been forced up to famine level, or at least to the maximum, which the moneyed classes could afford to pay, and would have been far beyond the reach of the purses of the poor.

The working classes of to-day would not tolerate a system of *laissez faire* which would have had injurious consequences to them. They made it very clear that they would not submit to restrictions which were not to be universal. Therefore it was that the Government, after many appeals to the nation to limit itself by voluntary action, which met with a creditable degree of response, did at last decide to adopt a universal system of coupons and rations. The scheme finally elaborated by the Food Controller was

¹For the course of events on the sea during this period see Vol. VII, pp. 98-112.

announced on February 9, and came in force for London and the Home Counties on February 25, 1918. On April 7 it was extended to the rest of the country. By the terms of this plan, each adult was to receive four coupons a week for meat, and each child under ten four half-coupons. Three of the four coupons could be used to obtain 1s. 3d. worth of uncooked butcher's meat. The fourth coupon was available to buy five ounces of uncooked butcher's meat with bone, in bacon, ham, poultry, game, rabbit, and tinned meats.

The utmost efforts of the best-intentioned officials could not alter the fact that, when fewer ships were available to carry food, freights would rise and prices would go up. The report of the Committee appointed to inquire into the cost of living in 1918, shows how much they did go up, as compared with the prices of 1914. The Committee went into careful classifications of "skilled", "semi-skilled", and "unskilled", which, though instructive in their way, need not be quoted. They affected the important urban working class. It will be sufficient to give the general average:

		1914		1918	
		s.	d.	s.	d.
Food	...	24	11	47	3
Sundries	...	1	2	2	6
Fuel and Light		2	4	4	2
Rent	...	6	7	6	7
Fares	...	0	10	1	0
Insurance	...	3	0	3	0
Clothing	...	5	6	10	9
		44	4	75	3

Percentage increase, 70.

but a glance at these figures will show at once that the 70 per cent increase in this case understates the fact. The "general percentage" is kept down by the moderate rise, or absence of rise, in certain items which are not the most sensitively felt. It is also to be remembered that only government action prevented a far greater rise—in rent for instance. But when we look at the three items which are most acutely impressed on the attention of housewives and parents, namely:—"food", "fuel", and "clothing", it will be seen that the increase was one of all but 100 per cent. And of course such figures as those of the Report do not give, and do not aim at giving, information on points which are of the utmost importance—such as the difficulty, and even at times the impossibility of getting what was needed—*when* it was needed; the monotony in the food supplied, the unavoidable delays and waste of time. The Committee even allow that its estimates were subject to revision, and that the increase of the cost of living for such families as it had in its mind, from July, 1914 to July, 1918, was not 70 but was 74 per cent. The experience of individual persons, who go by their own purchases of food, clothes, and utensils, shows them that the increase is 100 per cent. The Committee itself had to issue a note of warning showing that prices of food rose again after September, 1918. We quote the confession as an illustration only, for the date goes beyond the fourth year.

General percentages have their value,

D. H.

CHAPTER VI

THE ITALIAN BREACH AND RECOVERY

(October, 1917—June, 1918)

Strategic Weaknesses of Italian Position—The Vulnerable Bridgehead at Tolmino—Cadorna's Misplaced Confidence—German and Austrian Attack in the Fog of October 24—German Tactics—Confusion in the Italian Artillery—Von Below's Gains—The Beginnings of Confusion—The Increasing Gap—The Break Through at Caporetto—Capella's Disregarded Advice—Reserves Blocking the Roads—The Northern Line Broken—Retreat to the Tagliamento and Piave Lines—Cadorna's Correct Decision for the Piave—The Importance of Venice—The Fighting Retreat of the Third Italian Army from the Isonzo—The Retreat of the Second Army's Right Wing—Misfortune at the Tagliamento—The Extent of the German-Austrian Victory—Picking Up the Pieces—The Piave Line—General Diaz succeeds General Cadorna—New Austrian Attacks on the Northern Flank—The Monfenera Ridge—The Fights in the Mountains—Badenecchi—The Belated Winter—A Great Recovery—The Austrian Plan of an Attack on the Piave—Foci of the Assault—Asiago Front—Failure against British and French Divisions—Brenta Repulse—Italian Triumph at Monfenera and Monte Grappa—Austrian Disaster at the Montello Ridge—Austrian Failures on the Middle and Lower Piave—The Cost of the Defeat.

ON the Italian front the opposing armies, as on the line of trenches from the Flanders coast to the Vosges, faced one another over several hundreds of miles. But the positions held by the Austro-Hungarians were such as lent themselves to defence over the whole area; they held the interior lines of one vast salient, the Trentino, on the Italian flank; and over the other sectors, from the Julian Alps to the Adriatic, occupied massive fortifications, natural and artificial, which were as well fed with supplies as the Italian lines. If Austria-Hungary could ever have commanded the whole of her resources of man-power for an attack on Italy the Italian lines must have crumpled. As it was, the Italians, by better generalship and by better fighting, were able to hold the Austro-Hungarian armies in check, and by matching mobility against mass contrived for two years to stave off the only heavy Austrian attack on their exposed

Trentino flank, and to plant many damaging counter-attacks in the less invulnerable sector of the Austrian line, the Isonzo front. But this state of unstable equilibrium could be maintained only by massing the bulk of the Italian forces at selected points, leaving the rest of the line thin—dangerously thin if ever the Austrians should be able to combine weight with surprise in attacking it.

That state of things became emphasized after the series of attacks by which General Cadorna drove the Austrians from the greater part of the Bainsizza plateau in the early autumn of 1917. It was evident to any comprehension that his powder was spent, and that he could not push a success which promised so much at first without a risk that he dared not take. Speculation may ask whether, if he had been given reinforcements from the Allies' general reserve, he could have so enlarged the victory as to make it decisive; and the answer

may be that Cadorna's troops, after a preliminary success which surprised themselves, were in fact held up by the difficulties of supply across the semi-roadless plateau. Greater numbers might have effected more; but probably, unless the Austro-German intelligence service had been a great deal worse than it was, would have been met by corresponding numbers from the general reserve of the Central Powers, who were at least as well able to move reserves as the Entente. Speculation apart, the fact remains that Cadorna's position, after the gratifying but truncated success of his attacks, was awkward.

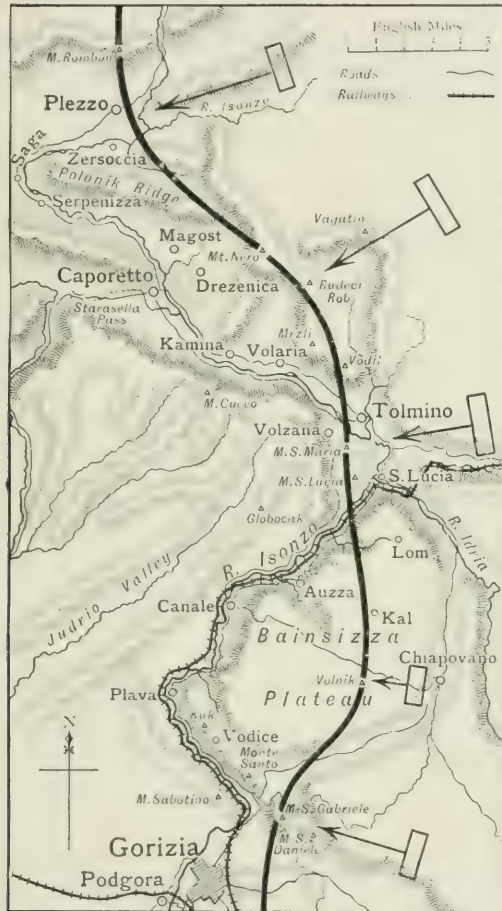
It was not unlike that into which Ludendorff blundered in the following July, when he pushed recklessly forward towards the Marne, and exposed his flank to that counter-attack by Foch from which there was no recovery. Cadorna had pushed far forward into difficult country; he had an exposed flank stretching many miles to the north, and badly protected; nay more, it had one point of great vulnerability at Tolmino, where Cadorna had never been able to drive the Austrians from a secure bridgehead over the Isonzo. If he could have commanded the forces, the artillery, and the time to reduce this bridgehead, his position would have been one on which Italy and the Allies would have had reason to congratulate themselves, because he would have ended the fighting season with a victory to his credit and with an enemy left without a good opening. As it was, he could neither go forward nor even prepare to exploit his victory in the following spring.

He was like a tennis player who has been forced into a bad position in the court, and must think first of defensive strokes, with the hope that his defence will prove adequate and the fear that it may not. The fear in Cadorna's case arose not so much from the recuperative ability of the Austro-Hungarian forces, many of which even at this date were disaffected, as from the knowledge that the German High Command, which had so often come to its Ally's assistance before, would be able to do so again, now that Russia no longer preoccupied the considerations of either. Germany had never forgone the opportunity of striking at a weakened flank, either in Galicia, or Serbia, or Rumania; and it was unlikely that Italy would not tempt her.

It had tempted her. Germany's decision to assist Austria on the Italian front was taken before the shells had begun to burst on Monte San Gabriele, the bastion which held back the Italians from the road through the plain to Laibach. Cadorna was aware that the German attempt would be made, and he believed that it would take the form of a counter-attack on the positions which his army had won on the difficult Bainsizza plateau north of San Gabriele. But that line of attack, though offering possibilities in September, 1917, was less attractive in October, for the Austrian reserves had been drawn upon to defend San Gabriele, and the Italians had had time to strengthen their defences and their communications on the plateau to the north of it.

The German plan was to find a

point where fighting had not taken place. The point they selected was well to the north of the plateau, where the Isonzo makes an acute angle almost like a V laid on its side, thus: >.



The Italian Line at the time of the German-Austrian Attack of October 24, 1917. (The arrows show the direction of the main attacks.)

The Austrian line ran across the mouth of the letter, thus: >, and was extremely strong for several reasons. North of the crossing the Austrians held the powerful Rudeci Rob ridge, south of it their line ran below the Lom plateau, from which the Italians

had been unable to evict them, and was accordingly protected by it, and inside the > the position itself was supported by the hills of Santa Maria and Santa Lucia. The mere statement in these terms of the components of the position will show why the Italians had not reduced it, though it also indicates the importance of doing so if complete security were desired.

The Italian line north of it ran north-westwards to Plezzo, and was on the east side of the Isonzo, but too near the river, and served by difficult communications. In order to improve it the Italians must have undertaken operations comparable to those about Monte San Gabriele, and when they had done so they would have been merely on the verge of a wilderness of hills which would have led them nowhere. From an offensive point of view they were amply warranted in doing nothing; from a defensive standpoint they were justified in inactivity by the absence for two years of any Austrian movement in this region.

The German Command, with a good deal of subtlety, perceived the advantage of directing a blow where it would be least expected. Their movements and intentions could not be entirely concealed, and by the middle of October, 1917, the Italian Intelligence Service knew not only that considerable Austrian forces were being moved up, but that German divisions had been sent to co-operate, and that they were concentrating in the Tolmino-Plezzo sector, opposite the Italian Second Army. Even so, and even knowing the weakness of the defensive position which the Italian Second

Army held, Cadorna was not greatly disturbed, though he was dubious about his artillery strength. He may have believed that it was too late in the year for an enemy attack on a large scale; and he had no suspicion of an underlying danger which was forced on the attention of the Franco-British forces in the following year, namely, that armies which have been occupied in offensive movements for a long period are not easily converted to the tactics of defence. The Italians had been pressing the Austrians for two years; they had no experience of German offensives, and no knowledge of the new tactics in which Ludendorff had trained the German divisions, and of which the Italian defence was to be made the subject of experiment.

Enlightenment was not immediate, though it was sudden enough. In the week between the 17th and 24th the enemy guns continually bombarded the Italian lines, and on the night of the 23rd the whole sector from Plezzo down to the Italian positions on the Bainsizza plateau, and farther south, were subjected to the concentrated fire of high-explosive and gas shells which usually preceded an attack in force. On the morning of the 24th, when heavy autumn mists enshrouded the valleys, the fire ceased as if, owing to the conditions, any attack that had been projected had been abandoned. It was a German ruse. With great daring the German divisions, and the most trusted Austro-Hungarian troops in support, were sent forward in masses through the mists, no guns supporting them, but with no barrage to herald them and give warning of their

approach. The device succeeded. At a number of points the momentum of the attackers burst through the first- and second-line defences. The Germans were held up just below Plezzo, where the Isonzo makes another acute turn like that at Tolmino, but with the



Italian Official Photograph

Italy's Mountainous Front

The Italian sentry is shown standing beside Austrian graves on the Col di Lana, where an Italian mine blew off a mountain-top held by the enemy.

V reversed, thus: <. But, only a little farther south, they got well through all the way between the south-eastern front of the Polounik ridge and Monte Vodil, which was just north of the Tolmino bridge-head, a serrated gap of 7 or 8 miles.


The break was made on the new tactical German plan. It was not a clean break, such as a sharp-edged

shovel might make, but one that was effected as if with a many-pronged fork which pierced the Italian lines. Behind the storm troops came the machine-gun sections, with machine-guns used not by threes and fours but by scores, even by hundreds; and these were used to right and left to take the pierced lines in flank and rear, so that the Italian line was not battered in but torn in fragments. What, it will be asked, were the Italian troops doing, and what were the Italian guns doing? The Italian troops, who had been scarified with mustard gas for days, fought as well as their bewilderment and confusion would permit. The guns were mismanaged. The artillery commander of the corps (4th) which held the line between Plezzo and a point south of Caporetto had laid down instructions which would have served excellently had the artillery practice of the previous two years been followed by the combatants. But instead of the front-line bombardment which had been the Austrian custom, the German-Austrian barrage extended far behind the lines, breaking up telephones and other vital means of communication, and severing the central artillery command from the forward batteries.

The mist prevented battery commanders from taking the situation competently into their own hands. Confusion spread from the troops to the guns.

South of the 4th Corps were part of the Italian 7th Corps and the 27th Corps, guarding what has been described as the Tolmino bridge-head, and taking in a line which extended

in front of the Lom spur to where the Aoscek rivulet borders the Bainsizza plateau. The German-Austrian drive was as heavy here as farther north. It made the best use of the bridge-head, with its first-class road, and at some points the storm troops got right on to the Italian guns. A German brigade pushed far on to the height of Globocak, which lay $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles behind the Italian first lines, and stormed it. The height dominated the road communications of the Italian front in this sector, and its complete loss would have precipitated disaster. It was, however, retaken with self-sacrificing gallantry by a brigade of Bersaglieri (the 5th), who drove back the Germans with a rush, and, having won back the position, kept it against counter-attack and all that the Germans could do. They had saved the key position and its guns.

Thus, in the Tolmino sector, though the situation was serious, the worst had not happened; and on the Kal spur, as well as on the Bainsizza plateau, the damage done was slight. At night on the 24th the situation might roughly be described as one of great difficulty for the Italians, whose line had been so seriously torn in places that a swing-back of a much larger section of the line had become imperative. But the case was not desperate. In detail the damage was as follows: At the extreme north the enemy drive had stopped short of the apex of the  where the Isonzo makes an acute bend at Saga. The Italians still held the Polounik ridge. But at the southern end of this ridge the enemy were through on a good length of

front, and were coming straight on to Caporetto with two armies, whose lines of attack were also V-shaped, thus: <.

General von Below (who was afterwards to conduct a far greater drive on the British front in the following year) was in command, and was adding to his large gains in men and guns and positions every hour. Another of his forces was coming up on to Caporetto from Tolmino like a third prong along the Isonzo, thus: <. As against this the Italian 27th Corps was falling back in good order, and though Monte Nero, and everything south of it as far as Monte Globocak, had gone, and the whole Isonzo double bend between Canale and Plezzo would probably have to go, Italian Head-quarters believed that they had sounded the limits of the reverse. The attackers had lost heavily; they had perhaps exhausted their momentum; at any rate, surely the situation could be patched up by the reserves marching up.

But the situation looked better at a distance than on the spot. The disorder was not wide, but it was deep. The reserves coming up became entangled with troops falling back from lost positions. The whisper of disaster became a clamour, and the German torrent, fed by fresh rivulets, became wider, and surged round isolated posts of men who could only surrender or be wiped out—as many were. The defile at Saga, where the German advance had been held up, became a death-trap for its Italian defenders, and was abandoned, so that the breach widened towards the north and south

of Tolmino, where the left wing of the hard-pressed 27th Corps began to stagger back, so that here the breach widened towards the south. That occurrence dragged back the 27th's right-wing brigades, and as they went the positions of the Bainsizza plateau became untenable.

Everywhere the blunt base of the German wedge, following its thin edge, was making the hole wider. General Capello, commanding the Second Italian Army against doctor's orders, was under no illusions, and declared to the Commander-in-Chief that it was no use trying to plaster up the wound. On the afternoon of October 25 he advised a general retirement. General Cadorna could not believe the man on the spot: he determined to make another effort to put things right. In vain. General Capello's insight was correct. Reserves could not be got up over roads blocked with fugitives, and if they could they would not have availed to put a spirit into an army not indeed seized with panic, but simply moving backwards like sheep hustling through narrow gaps.

Another day passed, and half the Second Army had ceased to exist as an army. The Germans were coming along the valleys of the two rivers Natisone and Judrio in two huge columns 7 miles apart. They were out of the mountains and into the plains, the Isonzo behind them, and in front of them the prospect of cutting the whole of the Isonzo communications of the Third Army on the Carso. Capello, on the 25th, had advised a retreat to the River Tagliamento; on the 26th it was painfully



drawn by F. Matania

Preventing Artillery from falling into the Enemy's Hands: scene among the mountains during the Italian retreat in October, 1917

clear that that was not far enough. The civilian population had taken fright, and were adding to the block by congesting the roads; and neither the gallantry of such unbeaten regiments as the 5th Bersaglieri, who kept the enemy at bay on Globocak and behind it, nor the fact that the right wing of the Second Army was coupled up strongly and well with the unbeaten Third Army on the Carso, could atone for the fact that in the north the line was gone. Its disappearance made not merely the retreat of the southern armies inevitable, but threatened the retreat of the forces, never very strong, which held the positions that stretched in a north-easterly arc about the Carnia and Cadore regions and joined the Trentino lines. The whole structure of the Italian plan of operations, with the thin line at the foot of the mountains encircling the Italian plain, and with the striking forces massed on the plain's eastern boundary, was in danger of collapse. It could be held up only by a general retreat to the shortest possible line joining the mountains with the Adriatic, and yet preserving what was most vital to Italian security. That line was the line of the Piave River; the pause at the Tagliamento would be made only to gain time.

The Piave was a vital line; and though it was not a good one to hold from the standpoint of ease of defence, the strategic insight of Cadorna at once decided on it. It must be held, he declared, at whatever cost. As the Italian retreat grew progressively more costly there were many who pressed for a retreat to a shorter and

more easily defensible line, such, for example, as might stretch from the apex of the Trentino to the sea, though this would imply the sacrifice of Venice. The idea that Venice might be left to the mercy of those who had bombarded Rheims or bombed Ravenna was one which might well alarm the civilized world. But it was something stronger than sentiment which dictated Cadorna's decision. Italy was fighting a defensive battle on behalf of the Allies' sea-power. The loss of Venice would imply the surrender of the last Italian sea base of any consequence on the Adriatic. The Adriatic, with its fine harbours and Austrian bases, Fiume, Pola, Cattaro, would become an Austro-German lake, a sally-port from which it would be in the highest degree difficult to hold up an intensified submarine campaign against the Mediterranean communications. The forces at Salonika, as well as those in Palestine, would be menaced. The whole naval organization of the Allies would have to be readjusted to meet the new situation.

The decision to bring back the whole of the Italian forces to the Piave, and to sacrifice all that had been won, and more, in two years of effort was not taken a moment too soon, for through the breach in the Second Army's lines the German-Austrian troops were spreading fan-wise into the plain, and narrowing the already narrow avenue by which the Third Army and the unbroken corps of the Second Army could escape. The roads of their retreat were fast becoming blocked by fleeing civilians;



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY

BASSANO, LTD.

*General Sir William Birdwood, G. C. M. G., K. C. B.
"The Soul of Anzac" and Commander of the Fifth British Army
in the closing campaign of the War*

and there were but three bridges over the swollen Tagliamento which could be used. At a moment when rapidity of movement was imperative it was hourly becoming more difficult. The retreat, which was in progress without reservation on the afternoon of October 27, was a sound decision, and it afforded scope for some very fine generalship—and for many heroic sacrifices—but it could not in the nature of the situation be carried out without losses of a very grave kind.

So far as the units south of the great gap were concerned it could not have been bettered. The unbeaten 6th and 8th Corps of the Second Army held on till the Third Army was in motion. The Third Army fought rear-guard actions unflinchingly from the Carso to the Piave, a distance of 60 miles. The withdrawal of the guns from Monfalcone on the coast was in itself a wonderful feat, but it was a feat comprised in the greater one that though the Third Army suffered very great losses, especially of material—aerodromes, stores, bases, hospitals, all had to be left behind—yet it withdrew as an intact army and retained nearly all its guns. Those in the best position to judge, and among these we count the units of the British Red Cross, have spoken of the order and punctuality of the great retreat of the Third Army as little short of a miracle.

North of the Third Army the task was more difficult, because the enemy coming down from the hills were curving south and ever threatening to out-flank and cut off the retreating and hitherto unbroken divisions of the

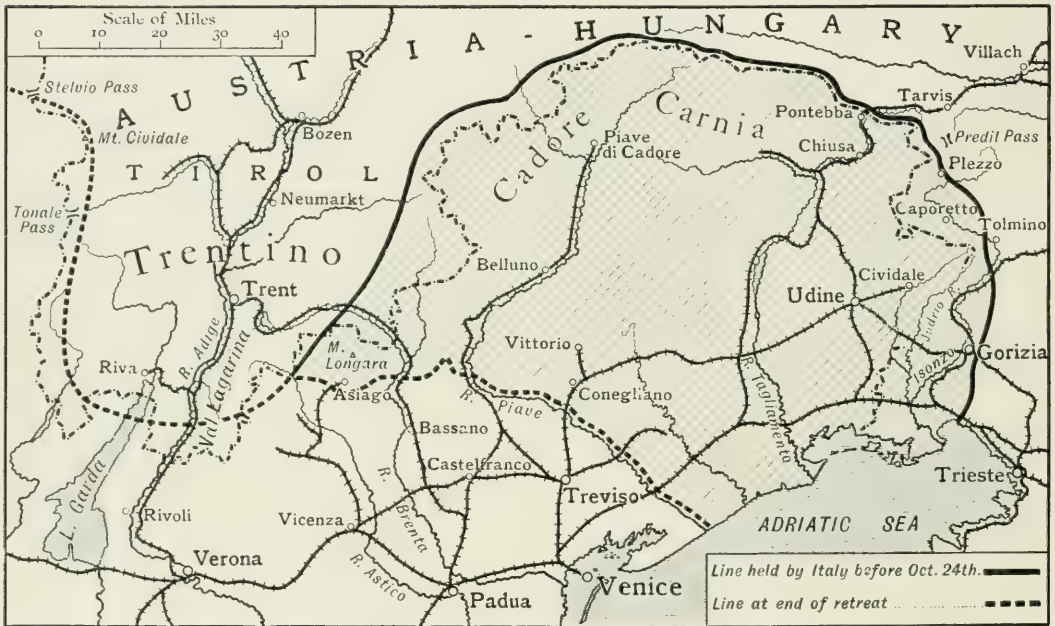
Second Army's right wing. These troops, who had fought a retiring action so well, were visited by a most disheartening mishap. The Austrians aimed at cutting them off at Udine, where a big bridge crosses the Tagliamento. The bridge was mined; it was blown up too soon on the approach of enemy cyclists, and a large number of troops, with a great train of artillery, were left behind, with a flooded river between them and safety. Large numbers surrendered, as well they might, for they had been fighting and marching on empty stomachs and saw disaster waiting for them; others turned southward in the hope of finding other crossings; but many others tried to ford the river, and, aided by a rapid fall of the flood, which is by no means an unusual occurrence in these gravelly rivers of the Friulian plain, reached safety after fighting for it. It was the loss of guns which was the worst misfortune. Forty-six heavy-gun batteries had been brought down—with what agonies of toil only the artillerymen could say—and the effort was in vain, for they had to be abandoned.

The fall of the flood saved the Italians many men, but it was a piece of fortune which had its untoward side as well, because the Tagliamento's value as a line of defence, or even as a strong factor in delaying the enemy's advance, was thereby diminished. If the flood had continued to pour down from the hills, the river in its bridgeless northern reaches would have been a serious obstacle for the advancing enemy; and a small force would have been able to hold them up. A small

force of brave men, under a good leader, General di Giorgio, had been sent, but the fall of the river made their task too heavy; they had to be content to make the enemy pay dearly for the crossing, then, under pressure, themselves to fall back.

Their exploit in holding up superior

for the heavy task of putting the Piave into a proper state of defence. The retreat was slowing in the first days of November, and by the end of the first week the Tagliamento had been left behind, and Austrian patrols were feeling their way 12 miles west of its upper reaches. But by



The Italian Line before and after the German-Austrian Attack, October 24, 1917

The shaded portion shows the territory lost by the Italians between the opening of the offensive and their stand on the Piave at the end of their retreat

forces, and of saving their fellows at cost to themselves, was repeated and renewed by many units of the Second and Third Italian Armies, of which the cavalry and the machine-gun sections of several regiments gathered glory from retreat. The Genoa and Novara regiments were among those of which the losses sustained were comparable only to the services rendered. But the time won was short enough: it seemed perilously short

that time the remains of panic had subsided; the confusion was being cleared up, and the bitter condemnation with which General Cadorna had assailed the units of the Second Army that had failed him had acted as a spur to the Italian spirit. Men were coming back, and were being re-cast into units, while the Italian military engineers, among the best in the world, were working with a fury of energy to make the defences sound.

The task was accomplished. Even in those first days of November the worst that was to happen had happened; the German-Austrian steam-roller was beginning to lose its impetus, as well it might, for if the greatness of the disaster had taken Italy by surprise, it had also found Germans and Austrians unprepared for the extended nature of their success. They could not push on far enough or fast enough; they had exploited their victory to its fullest possible extent, and could assimilate no more. The mouthful they had taken was large enough; it hardly needed the customary German exaggeration to exhibit its damaging nature to Italy and to the Allied cause.

For the whole of the time it lasted their *communiqués* metaphorically rang joy-bells and held out banners; one of the earliest of them had an ecstatic reference to the part which the forces of "his apostolic Majesty", the Emperor Carl of Austria, had taken in the victory; another exultingly remarked that the captures were extraordinary, even in this period of large captures. We know from Mr. Davis, the American dentist to the Kaiser, how that shining-armoured monarch viewed these events. "If I can take 300,000 Italians prisoners," he observed, "why should I not crush the French and British forces?" and the Italian success, which had been achieved with the stiffening of no more than ten German divisions, was an important determinant in the subsequent attitude and actions of the Kaiser, of Ludendorff, of the Great Head-quarters Staff, and last, of the German people.

At this time, as was subsequently declared by M. Yoffe, the Bolshevist Ambassador in Berlin, a revolutionary movement, sown by Russian example and watered by stolen roubles, was sprouting in Germany. But the October victory of 1917 killed the germinating shoot. The German people, no less than the military autocracy, were encouraged to wait for another spring, and see what force would do on the Western Front. The Italian losses were not 300,000, as the Kaiser boasted, but they may be set down without exaggeration at 200,000 or more, though not, of course, 200,000 bayonets. In the number were included labour battalions in a very large proportion, for the constructional side of Italian warfare was continually great. The loss of guns, 2000 in number, was very serious, and so also was the loss of munitions, stores, and constructional material, which had vanished, not in proportion to the army corps vanquished, but in much greater measure.

The "material" of at least two armies had vanished; part of the *personnel* of another was gone or imprisoned. The Second Army was no longer an army. Six of its army corps did not exist. Even when it is remembered that the bulk of these losses had been suffered in the difficulties of a retreat in which order had been maintained over a large part of the front, and heavy losses inflicted on the enemy, one can but marvel at the greatness of the effect when compared with the insignificance of the cause. The *communiqué* in which General Cadorna stigmatized the fount and origin of

the disaster: "the feeble resistance of the detachments of the Second Army, which permitted Austro-German forces to pierce our left wing on the Julian front", seemed barely enough to account for it. General Cadorna's complaints of the disintegrating effects of raw Socialism on his troops near Monfalcone, have been mentioned in a former chapter. It is not to be wondered at that, when his *communiqué* was published, even in the censored form that reached the Allied Press, the blackest stories should have been circulated of cowardice and treachery among those who gave way. There is perhaps something in the stories; but there is more in the fact that the Germans reaped the advantage of an attack which was delivered with mastery, and which took troops, ill-placed and ill-suited to withstand it, by surprise. The Germans, according to their military teaching, pushed it for all the attack was worth, and the Italian strategic position was one which, if once shaken, was perilously likely to topple over. It did topple; and whether Cadorna was badly served or not, he cannot be held without blame.

The delaying actions were fought with good results; the Third Army was got into position behind the Piave, the fragments of the Second Army were stuck together. The Fourth Army, guarding the Cadore semicircle of mountain positions on its left, was most skilfully brought back, helped greatly by the heroism of many isolated detachments on the Carnia front, which fought to the last man. The

stories of these forlorn struggles of brave men in the Alpine heights of Cadore and Carnia have not yet been told, but they will remain legends of the mountain people when the greater movements of the war have passed into formal history.

The cumulative effect of their skill and these sacrifices were such that the Fourth Army was brought back to fill in a shortened line the gap between the First Army and the Third, which had now assimilated part of the Second. The Italian line now followed the Piave in a line bending strongly back north-westwards from the Adriatic to where the river comes westwards from the hills at Monte Tomatico. Thence the line took to the mountains running westwards across the Val Cismon to the valley of the Brenta, where it joined the old line of the First Army. The line between the Piave and the Brenta would have to be modified; it was assailable, but it could be held while better positions were organized. The task of organizing the new defences of Italy was entrusted to new hands. A conference was held at Rapallo on November 4. It was the first of the meetings designed to bring about that unity of command which alone could secure, and which eventually did secure, success. It was attended by members of the British and French War Cabinets, and by General Foch and General Sir William Robertson, as well as by General Porro, the Sub-chief of the Italian General Staff. The meeting decided on the monthly Councils at Versailles, and that was its most far-reaching decision. Its immediate

decision was to transfer General Cadorna to this Council, and to hand over his command to General Diaz. General Porro's duties were undertaken jointly between General Badoglio (acting Chief of Staff), and General Giordino. These were all young men: General Badoglio only forty-six; the others just over fifty.



General Diaz, who succeeded General Cadorna as Commander-in-Chief on the Italian Front

Their hands soon became full. The Fourth Army was scarcely in position before the enemy began testing the Piave line, and revealed his intention of holding the Italians here while trying to turn the line, not by a direct attack from the east, but by bearing down from the north along the routes which had furnished communications for the Austrian offensive of 1916.

The new front of the Austrian attack was in that area of the Setti

Communi, the Seven Communes, of which Asiago is at the centre of the last saucer-shaped plateau before the plains are reached. Eastwards and north-eastwards of Asiago are a series of mountain positions, most of which had been won by Italian perseverance and hard fighting, and a number of which were now under pressure to be abandoned. Eastwards of Asiago, too, lies the valley of the Brenta, down which the Austrians were coming from the north, and east of that again runs the valley of the upper Piave, past Monte Tomatico. At the beginning of the new Austrian attack the Italian line, which, in its most forward position, had started westward of Asiago, and had run almost north, had already been bent back north-westwards from Asiago to the valley of the Piave. At the end of the attack Asiago had been abandoned (November 9), and a series of mountain positions, beginning with Monte Lissier on the upper Brenta, and ending with Monte Tomatico on the Piave (November 15).

The Austrian attack was not then at an end; in some respects it was merely beginning, for new Austrian divisions were brought up from the Isonzo and Carso armies, but the first fortnight of November had set the Italians on their feet again. They were now fighting man to man, if the expression be understood figuratively, and were no longer to be taken by surprise; so that, though here and there their lines were pushed back by heavier metal or superior numbers, the pivotal points never gave way prematurely, and the hold on the hills that guard the plain was maintained. Surveying

these actions at a distance of time, one perceives in them a resemblance to the situation at Verdun, though the ground was so different and the numbers and armament more widely apart. In the Italian theatre there was not one river but two—the Piave and the Brenta, and the enemy could advance down both to sweep the Italians from their mountain lines north of the Italian plain. Consequently, though the Austro-German attack was general over the whole 20-mile front between and beyond the rivers, there were two selected points of attack, one near the Brenta and one near the Piave, just as there had been the Mort Homme on the west of the Meuse, and the Douaumont-Vaux ridge east of it at Verdun. These were attacked sometimes simultaneously and sometimes alternately.

For ten days the Austrian attacks continued on the outnumbered Italians east of the Brenta in the Monte Castelvoghera and Monte Badenechi region, and yet failed to shake the Italian defence. On the upper Piave positions the attacks were even more determined, and for five days Austrians and Bosnians, and a German Jäger division were sent in to drive the Italians from the mountain defences, of which Monte Tomba was the key, and the Monfenera ridge the last position. It was here that the action was fought which was to determine the result of this struggle, though the enemy was to make many more attempts to gain ground and valuable positions elsewhere.

On November 20 the German Jägers fought their way to the crest

of the Monfenera ridge; a counter-attack drove them back, but the Italians could not hold on under the shell-fire; they had to be withdrawn and leave the crest a no-man's-land—just as the Talou ridge, or the crest of Hill 304, had remained at Verdun. On November 21 the tide turned,



The Earl of Cavan, commanding the British Forces on the Italian Front
(From a photograph by Lafayette)

turned almost imperceptibly, but turned. The Italians pushed forward a little, sustained another big attack, and, though nearer the river and at the extremity of their effort, were still not beaten. They held on. But just as, in a foot-race, the man who is near cracking wins in the last strides, because his opponent cracks first, so the Italians came triumphantly through this supreme test. The German-Austrians had shot their bolt, and the

forward troops, who had held on by their nails, heard just in time that a reserve brigade was coming up. Weary, broken, and all but spent, they made one more effort, drove the enemy back, re-established the line, and saved the Monfenara ridge. Four days more went by before the enemy relinquished his efforts; but the issue had been decided on November 21. The German-Austrians would not come to the plain that way.

North and west of this field of battle, and about half-way between the Piave and the Brenta, the enemy had attacked the sharp salient which the Italian line made at Monte Fontana Secca. Thence the Italian line went abruptly south-west by the Col del Orso, and a point north of Monte Grappa, past Monte Pertica, through the Col del Berretta, to San Marino on the Brenta. The sharp apex at Monte Fontana Secca was prudently abandoned and withdrawn to Monte Solarolo and Monte Spinoncia, where for a week it withstood all the hammering the Germans could give it without appreciable flattening. In vain the enemy's picked mountain troops were sent forward; if they fought their way to a position, such as that of Monte Spinoncia, the Italian Alpini threw them back again. Farther west the enemy had, at a heavy cost, a greater tactical success, for he took Monte Pertica after three or four abortive attempts. It was a necessary preliminary to the plan of his new attack, designed for December. For this attack the eastern or Piave hinge was neglected. The attack was transferred to the other hinge—or, to repeat

the comparison already applied, the Douaumont ridge was to be left alone while Hill 304 and the Mort Homme were attacked.

In the December struggle the British divisions, which had been sent out under the Earl of Cavan, were to take a part, as also were the French divisions. The French took over the Monte Tomba sector near the Piave, the British the Montello sector, in both of which it was expected that the enemy would renew his attacks. As things turned out, Marshal Conrad von Hoetzendorff, who had been allowed to resume command after General von Below had done his work, entrusted his subordinate, General von Krobatin, with an attack between the Brenta and the Piave, in which the main effort was to be made far away from the Piave in the Asiago sector.

The attack began on December 4, and in pattern resembled the effort which had been so successful in first breaking the Italian front at Caporetto. A week's bombardment, of a depth and fury unknown in this region, was followed by an attack on the 7-mile front between Monte Sisemol and Monte Badeneccchi, in the Castelgomberti region, north of Asiago. The attack was skilfully conducted; its heavier assaults, thrown on the north-eastern flank towards Monte Badeneccchi, achieved the success denied to those on the other wing, and eventually compelled the abandonment of Monte Badeneccchi and Monte Castelgomberti. By December 5 these positions were gone, and the enemy was threatening to make a hole in the line. He might come

down the valley of the little Frenzela on to Valstagna, that key position which had once before been threatened, but which once again was destined to survive. The head of the valley, which had been held so long, had to be given up, but the Italian troops were steadily withdrawn to a line covering its outlet, while the Austrians brought up the heavy guns, which had served them so well, to renew the attack and repeat the success if they could.

They had done very well. The Badeneccchi success brought them 11,000 prisoners. While the new blow was in preparation General Krobotin launched an attack towards Monte Solarolo, to give him more elbow-room. He captured Monte Spinoncia (December 11-12) and after a week's hard fighting captured Monte Asolone's summit. But having got in a wedge at a great cost, he could drive it in no farther, and on December 21 he began to count his losses as well as his gains, and ceased to enlarge either.

The next day (December 22) von Hoetendorff sent forward his men for the renewal of their attempt to cut their way down the Frenzela valley to Valstagna. He captured the Col del Rossu, and Monte Melago, and several thousand prisoners, but that was the limit of the success, and beyond it, for by Christmas Day they were being attacked in turn, and when, two days afterwards, the belated snow came to bring the dilatory winter to the mountains and hold up the operations, the Austrians' object had not been achieved, while the Italians were

fiercely disputing the small gains they had purchased.

The months of November and December had put the hardest strain on Italian armies that had already suffered much, and it must have seemed to them that the fates fought against them when even the Italian winter by its late arrival declared not for them but for the enemy. But what they did, and what they achieved, re-established their shaken reputation, and restored to them their pride and their confidence. Moreover, the fact must be emphasized that, despite the arrival of French and British forces, the Italians won their victory for themselves, though they would be the last to depreciate the encouragement lent to them by the knowledge that French and British reserves stood at their back.

The preliminary disaster which the Italians suffered at Caporetto, followed as it was by the entire loss, and more, of all that they had won, and done, during the war, produced more impression on the minds of the Allied peoples than the great recovery they made in these months of sternest trial; but it is unfair that this should have been so, in almost the same measure that it would be unfair to magnify the disaster to the British Fifth Army in the following spring of 1918 at the expense of the great recovery which, by breaking the German centre at the second battle of Cambrai, brought down the German defensive structure in collapse.

The reverse was publicly, and, what was worse, privately attributed to Bolshevism among the troops, and

treachery higher up, but it is evident to any impartial student of the situation that these circumstances were neither the principal nor even large contributory causes. The first cause was the excellence of the German plan, leading, and tactics; the second was the unsuitability of the Italian alignment for defence, and the unpreparedness of the Italian troops of the very inactive Fourth Army to repel attacks, especially those of the energy and substance delivered against them. The Germans struck with all their force at what was the weakest spot locally, materially, and morally; and the most searching commentary on their success is that neither General Capello, who was nominally responsible for the defences of the Fourth Army, nor Generals Cadorna and Porro, who were responsible for the unfavourable position in which the whole Italian line was placed by a breach in the Julian Alps, retained their commands. That the Italian army as a whole was sound was shown by its recovery in 1917; though it was not till its more spectacular repulse of the next and last Austro-Hungarian assault in the following summer that the world was convinced of it.

Though the oncoming of winter and its long duration in the mountains relieved Italy and General Diaz of immediate apprehension, all these months were a period of grave anxiety to the Allies. The Germans were continually adding to their resources guns, and ammunition, and new divisions, subjected to the training in attacking tactics which had been so

successful at Caporetto. These preparations were made with the first and chief intention of smashing through the Franco-British front in the same fashion as in Italy, but the Allies were left till very late in uncertainty with regard to this intention. It was long suspected that the new German reserves would be used in the attempt to crush Italy by yet another and a greater hammer blow before the Franco-British front was dealt with.

If the Emperor Carl of Austria and Hungary and his Ministers, aware of the revolt struggling to boil up beneath their feet, had not been more anxious for peace than war, this plan might have been attempted; but though it was framed under the direction of the new Austrian Commander-in-Chief—von Arz—it hung fire till it was too late to speed it forward. But the German High Command, under Ludendorff, appear to have had only a doubtful intention of sparing German divisions to strengthen such an attack. Their wish was rather to send the Austrians in with all the weight that could be compassed, so as to attract British and French reserves, and possibly American reinforcements, to the Italian front, thus weakening the Franco-British defensive lines. Against this plan was opposed Austrian inertia. Austria was fearful of essaying to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for Germany; and throughout the spring of 1918 adopted an attitude of "leaving it to partner".

It was only after the successes of the first German blow at St. Quentin towards Amiens that she consented to give the plan a trial, and only

when the French were driven from the Chemin-des-Dames in May that her active preparations began. Von Arz, Conrad von Hoetendorff, and Czernin, believing that Germany was winning, "hastened valiantly" in M. Cambon's phrase, "to help the conqueror". The thought was the undoing of both Germans and Austrians, for the Austrian attack was destined to fail, in spite of Ludendorff's half-hearted attempt to aid it by delivering a premature attack under von Hutier at Montdidier, so as to retain Marshal Foch's reserves. He had promised a force under von Below, but the repulse by the British Third Army of the German attack north of Arras had put that out of the question.

The Austrian plan was very similar to that of the German new tactical offensive. A great attack was to be launched on a very wide front, practically along the whole sector of the Piave, with the idea of finding the weak point by infiltration, a term explicable by the simile already employed of the attack resembling the prongs of a fork. When the weak spot was found, every man and every gun must be concentrated there and sent forward regardless of losses. To General Diaz, commanding the Italian forces, belongs the credit of having found the antidote of infiltration in counter-infiltration, by which is meant the attack of anticipating the enemy by an exactly similar and preliminary manœuvre. Evidently counter-infiltration cannot be employed by a force that is not in superior strength, unless its information of the enemy's intentions is good. General Diaz was

well served, both by his own Intelligence Department and by some of his nominal enemies.

In the Austrian lines were many Jugo-Slavs who hated the Hapsburg domination, and were only too willing to wreck it if they could be assured that Italy would respect Jugo-Slav aspirations. That assurance had been given at the Rome Jugo-Slav Conference earlier in the year. Thousands of the men enrolled under the Austrian colours were eager to give proof of their disaffection; and it is said on good authority that some found the opportunity in giving information of the Austrian High Command's intentions to General Diaz, and many others by refusing to advance. That is very likely to be true, but what is certain is that the aeroplane scouting of the Italian, British, and French aviation service was overwhelmingly superior to that of their enemies.

Von Arz opened the Austrian attack on June 13, two days after the German attack on the French near Montdidier had failed, and opened it with an attack very far distant from the main effort which was to follow. The Tonale valley is on the western side of the Trentino wedge, and had never offered itself as a probable opening for an attack on a great scale. The division which von Arz sent forward there was well handled, and had been well trained in the new tactics of quick rushes of storm troops, and was rapidly brought up in motor-lorries so as to impart to their movement the element of surprise. There was no surprise; there was no success. The Italians were prepared, and the attack was

met with a well-placed and well-timed burst of artillery and machine-gun fire which withered it before it had been properly set in motion. Von Arz had sacrificed a first-rate division without unsettling the plans of General Diaz, his opponent, or causing him to move a man or a gun from the east of the Trentino to the west.

If von Arz had been wise, perhaps we should say if he had been able to

The shoulder was formed by the great Montello ridge. East of the ridge the Piave and the Italian position ran south-eastwards to the sea. West of the Montello the Italian position, unaltered since our previous description of it, dipped a little to follow the Piave on its curve round the northern shoulder of the ridge, then went roughly westwards, outlining the Monfenera ridge, encircled Monte Sola-



The Italian Line on the Piave Front, June, 1918: map showing the direction of the enemy's main assault on the Montello ridge and the two subsidiary attacks

be prudent, he would have taken warning by this failure. But the greater attack which he had projected was on a grand scale, covering 46 miles of the Italian front along the Piave, and extending across the mountain positions between Piave and the Brenta. The whole Italian main position was to be tested with concentrated and intensified attacks in mass at selected points. Von Arz's strategic plan might be described shortly as an attempt to pin the Italians to the Middle and Lower Piave while turning their line on either side of the shoulder joint where the Piave emerges from the mountains.

rolo with Monte Tomba behind, ran in front of Monte Grappa—a key position—between Monte Pertica and Monte Asolone, crossing the Brenta at Berretta, and thence being continued over the Frenzela River and its valley, below Asiago and Monte Sisemol.

The great foci of the Austrian attack were (1) the Montello shoulder; (2) the Monfenera ridge and the salient which joined it to the Monte Grappa positions; (3) the road by the Frenzela ravine on the one side of the Brenta, and by Monte Asolone on

the other towards Valstagna; and (4) the positions guarding the Asiago rim. It will be convenient to deal with the last named first. The Austrian forces had begun to mass, under the command of Conrad von Hoetzendorff and von Scheuchenstuel, for the wide frontal attack between Asiago and the Montello on June 13, and one of the conditions of their scheme of attack was that it should not be revealed by premature bombardment. Their masses were to rush the British, French, or Italian forces which stood with their backs to the wall. But General Diaz, well informed of their intentions, crippled their plan at the outset by opening a withering counter-bombardment on June 14, the day before that which was fixed by the enemy for the development of their attack. The enemy batteries and the crowded trenches were caught in position, and were unable to reply effectively because of their unwillingness to reveal their positions and concentrations, and were equally unable to put forward the time-table of their attack. Thus their scheme of surprise was more than nullified before the movement was set in motion. It was not till dawn of June 15 that they were ready, and the Austrian guns opened their whirlwind fire along the whole front, using an enormous quantity of gas shells.

The British forces under Lord Cavan had been moved from their first position on the Montello bastion, which they had occupied during those months of November and December, 1917, when the anticipated Austrian attack was withheld, and occupied the extreme left wing, west of Asiago, by

Cesuna. Their position was not an easy one to attack, for it was screened by pine forest, and any Austrian assault would have to traverse 3 to 5 miles of hill country after passing the pine belt. The Austrian commander, however, confident of the efficacy of the preliminary bombardment, and believing the line to be more thinly held than it was, advanced boldly on what he thought to be a mere covering force in the pine belt. He had four divisions to set against the British 23rd and 48th Divisions, but they were entirely unequal to the task of coping with the unexpected difficulties of the position.

The attack, when fully committed to its assault, was caught in the curtain-fire of the defence, and raked by machine-guns and Lewis guns from concealed infantry positions in the forest trenches—the Austrian commander having mistakenly reckoned on having to make the main effort beyond them. On the right of the position the 23rd Division repulsed the attack without yielding a yard; on the left the Austrians made ground, only to lose it again under the counter-attacks of the 48th Division. In one short sector the Sherwood Foresters, after being driven back, retook the ground without waiting for the support of reserves. At the point of the Austrians' greatest success, where a whole division, advancing under a smoke screen by the Cesuna hollow, pressed back both flanks of a Bucks and Oxford battalion, a bitter and confused struggle took place among the pines. Some Northumberland Fusiliers came to their compatriots'

aid, and the ground was held with bomb and bayonet. It was held till the Warwicks could come up, and their charge on the enemy flank rolled the Austrians back by nightfall with a loss of 7 guns and 1000 prisoners. It should be added that Italian gunners and Alpinists were of great service to the 48th Division.

than to lure the crowded Austrian masses into the zone of the French 75's, which their wonderful gunners used with the mobility of machine-guns. While the Austrian complication of sharpshooters, machine-gunners, covering-parties, and waves of assault were struggling in the common confusion of this fire, the French poilus



British Official Photograph

With the British Forces on the Italian Front: digging their trenches

On the right of the British the enemy had a different, but equally disastrous, experience against the French divisions below Monte Sismol who were the link between the British and the Italians at Costalunga. The French method, differing from that of the British, took the form of an instant elastic withdrawal under the enemy pressure; but it was a withdrawal which had no other object

came back at them with the bayonet. The Austrian attack was an imitation of the German method, and failed miserably. The French losses were incredibly light; the Austrians were anticipated, outmanœuvred, and out-fought.

Farther to the east the attack, here directed on the Italian forces by the Brenta, deepened. The main forces of the 11th Austro-Hungarian army,

under General von Scheuchenstuel, were sent forward against the high salients held by the Italians on both sides of the Frenzela Ravine. The attack here was heavier, more sustained, supported by a greater weight of gun-fire, than any that had been sustained by the Italians in the preceding year. It was repelled only by the same qualities of courage and sacrifice: by detachments which held out fighting when surrounded, which refused to recognize that their flanks were gone, because they hoped that they might be restored. The Italians were pressed back; they came again, and were finely supported by the Frenchmen, who, their task accomplished below Monte Sisemol, edged to their right and co-operated with their allies in the day-and-night struggle which, driving back the Austrians from Monte Melago and the Frenzela valley, made the road to Valstagna safe. The three nations—Britain, France, and Italy—preserved the Asiago rim.

To the Italian Fourth Army, entrenched between the Brenta and the Piave, fell the task of defending Monte Grappa on the one wing, and the Monfenera ridge on the other. Their trial was more severe than any they had yet experienced, for the Austrians, during the winter, had brought up their heaviest siege-guns with a view to blasting their way through. Under the wide and deep torrent of high-explosive the Italians recoiled; but they could not retreat far, for on the eastern flank they were clinging to a knife-edge, the surrender of which would have meant the out-

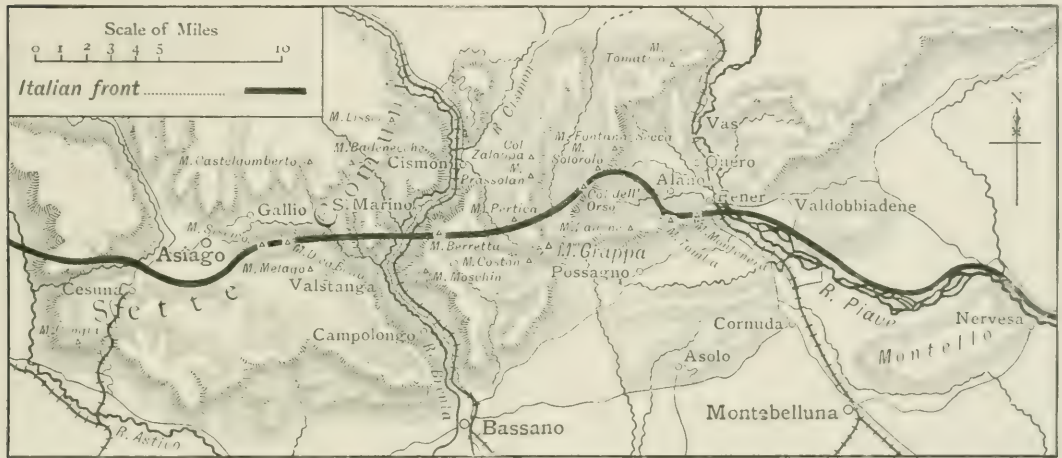
flanking of the supremely important Menletto shoulder. The gun-fire swept a number of the Italian garrison away, Monte Grappa was outflanked, and the onward coming masses of the Austrians threatened the Brenta valley by Asolone.

But the Italian commander had foreseen this as probable, if not inevitable. His reserves came into action before the Austrians could consolidate their success, and infiltrated the enemy masses even as the enemy had hoped to infiltrate the Italians. The ground towards the Brenta was first recovered. The manœuvre by which this was accomplished was a marvel of dash and forethought. It had been worked out beforehand, and was no improvisation, though its success depended quite as much on the fine temper of the troops as on the ingenious disposition of flanking machine-guns. First the Moschin Ridge was recovered, and the Asiago sector made safe against outflanking; then, with the Brenta front reconsolidated, the troops wheeled round on the Grappa position, recovering the Asolone outworks and thereafter the Orso heights. The initiative was regained. The Austrians could now only throw second-rate troops after first-rate ones in the effort to win back the Monte Grappa key positions, and the farther their attack went the worse it fared. Von Hoetendorff, like von Scheuchenstuel, had been fought to a standstill, and the Italians were busily recovering their forward machine-gun positions.

The attacks described, important as they were, occupied a subsidiary place in the main attempt to conquer

the Montello Ridge. This great bastion had been strongly fortified by General Plumer during the British occupation, and the Italian engineers who followed him had completed his work. The ridge is about seven and a half miles long, and rises like a magnificent Gibraltar to a height of 1000 feet above the Piave valley at its western end, its lie being roughly east and west and the river laving its feet. Its eastern

the shrunken waters of the summer Piave placed little obstacles in the way of the assault north and south of the ridge on the morning of June 15. The Austrian masses crossed the river under the protection of a smoke screen at Nervesa, and stormed the ridge from two sides. They met on the summit and, uniting, tried to sweep the ridge from east to west. It was a brilliantly successful opening to all



The Northern Italian Front, illustrating the Enemy's Attacks on Monte Grappa, Monfenera, and Asiago in June, 1918

cliff jutted over the Austrian lines, and from its saddleback Conegliano could be seen to the east. A key position indeed, and one against which the Austrians had massed their most powerful concentration of guns and their best troops.

The Austrian bombardment began on the night of the 14th-15th with high-explosives and gas shells, which burst on all the lower slopes, and were followed by a deluge of tear-gas shells on the ridge itself and its communications. The still night and the misty morning aided this preparation; and

appearance—two divisions well placed on the ridge, reinforcements crossing over strongly-held boat bridges, and a new force threatening to make another crossing 10 miles lower down stream.

Other Austrian attacks were being made still lower down the Piave near the Monte de Piave and the Zenson loop, as well as in the lagoon sector near S. Dona di Piave. General Diaz had to judge, and judge at once, where, and at what points, and with what strength, he would direct his chief counter-attacks. He unerringly selected

the southern side of the Montello ridge below Nervesa; and he penned the attackers between the Brentella rivulet and the Piave. His troops of position were sufficient to hold the attacks on the Middle Piave, and ground ceded at the lagoons did not matter. It was more perilous to give way, as he was obliged to do, on the northern side of the Montello. But the ground lost here was not great, and the Italians gave it up foot by foot. Once again the Austrians could not improve on their first rush. They found on the broad summit of the Montello a chess-board of ingenious defences against him: their attack slowed. It was fatal.

Mist had aided the Austrian attack. The weather immediately afterwards transferred its favours to the Italians. A thunderstorm broke in the hills; it was followed by long-continued rain. The Piave rose to a flood. The Italian, French, and British bombing aeroplanes destroyed the first bridges by which the Austrians had crossed the river, smashed bridge after bridge as soon as it was made, machine-gunned the reinforcements as they came up or as they attempted to cross. The Austrian divisions that had crossed were caught in a trap; it could only be opened by getting fresh troops into it so as to burst it. The rising river, the unceasing work of the murderous squadrons of aeroplanes, made it impossible. Every day the situation grew worse. The Alpine snows washed down by the rain made it at its worst from the 16th onwards.

A desperate attempt was made to relieve the situation by increasing the weight of the attack on the Middle

Piave. Unwilling Jugo-Slav and Czecho-Slovak troops of the Hapsburgs were shepherded to the attack by machine-gun fire; but they surrendered by hundreds at the first opportunity. Hungarian Divisions, good and ruthless fighters, were called in to do what the Slavs would not do. They fought well, and were continually urged forward by General Wurm in his effort to save by this diversion the trapped divisions on the Montello. By June 17 they had won a strong bridge-head and a long strip of the western bank of the Middle Piave. But they were here strongly assailed by Italian shock troops, the Arditi, and Italian naval guns on floating platforms were towed up from the Lower Piave to bombard the Hungarians' pontoon bridges. General Wurm, persisting for another two days, enlarged his bridge-head, but at the same time increased his commitments. For the more men he passed over the more he would have to bring back, and the more would never come back.

The Piave had risen against him, alike in the metaphorical and the literal sense. It was bringing down pine trees in flood to sweep away the bridges over which, before the Austrians consented to recognize their failure and defeat, the food and munitions for twenty-five divisions had to be carried. The army (under the nominal command of the Archduke Joseph), which had gathered in continually-increasing numbers on and about the Montello ridge, was not a true striking force, but one waiting to be struck. The Italians did not keep it waiting. Working on interior lines,

with columns amply supplied with ammunition, they battered it, and cut fragments out of it. On the Middle Piave, at the Zenson loop, they were able to treat the half-fed, improperly-munitioned troops that had got across, and could neither go forward nor back.

Every day the Italians accumulated strength for their counter-attack. Its greatest weight and fury were impending on June 21 and June 22, when the Piave began again to fall. By that time the Austro-Hungarian command had realized their failure, and in face of the hopelessness of retrieving it an Austrian Council of War, over which the Emperor presided, had decided on June 20 on a withdrawal. The fall of the river enabled it to be made, and it was begun with the utmost haste, and with little attempt to modify its confusion, on the

night of June 25-26. The Italian counter-stroke could not be delivered with full force or effect; only a week had elapsed since they had been placed on the defensive by the long-projected Austro-Hungarian attack, and the replacement of the defensive by the offensive on the great scale is not to be made in a week. But though the Austrians were not to be made to pay the fullest penalty for their failure, it was the costliest effort, but one, that they were called upon to pay. In their repulses in the mountain sectors, at the Montello shoulder, at the Middle Piave, and at the S. Dona Piave salient, they lost 200,000 men killed or prisoners. The Italian casualties in all were less than 40,000. The Hapsburg bolt was shot, and no call had been made on General Foch for reserves.

E. S. G.



Austrian Cavalry in Retreat

CHAPTER VII

FROM THE AISNE TO THE MARNE

(May 27-July 17, 1918)

Ludendorff's New Move—British Troops along the Aisne Sector—The German Attack of May 27—Loss of the Chemin-des-Dames—Franco-British Retreat—Enemy Crosses the Aisne—New Positions of the 9th British Corps—Some Heroic Episodes—Fall of Soissons—The Marne "Pocket"—American Troops block the Road from Château Thierry—British Victory on the Montagne de Bligny—German Danger in the Marne Salient—The Thrust between Noyon and Montdidier—Foch's Rehearsal for his Counter-stroke on the Marne—Fresh German Bid for Rheims—Its Dismal Failure—Italian Troops on the Montagne de Bligny—Ludendorff's Dilemma—His Last Grand Offensive—British Reinforcements for Foch—Secrets from German Prisoners—Gouraud's Appeal to his Troops—His Decisive Victory on the Champagne Front—Von Böhn's Troops Across the Marne—The Eve of Foch's Counter-stroke.

TOWARDS the end of the spring of 1918, while most of the world was wondering whether the Central Powers would launch their next thunderbolt against the Italian armies or against the Allies on the main Western front, Ludendorff set all doubts at rest with dramatic suddenness on May 27 by his great surprise attack on the Aisne, which, leading to the Second Battle of the Marne, brought the Germans nearer to Paris than they had been since Joffre turned them back in the critical days of September, 1914. Ludendorff's original plan, in spite of its spectacular successes, had gone none too well. In the first phase, on the Somme, he had failed both to reach Amiens and to separate the French and British armies. In the second phase, on the fields of Flanders, all his efforts to destroy the British armies and force a way to the Channel ports had similarly broken down. It only remained to turn to the French front again, and either resume the main offensive on the Arras-Amiens-Montdidier line or strike another blow

farther south in the direction of Paris. Ludendorff decided on the second alternative, since, involving as it did an advance against some of the strongest natural defences on the whole battle-front, it was the least expected. The chief drawback, from the German point of view, was that the new enterprise involved so vast a redistribution of forces, and so elaborate a scheme of camouflage in order to deceive the Allies as to the real point of attack, that nearly a month elapsed after the close of the Flanders offensive before everything was ready for the terrific advance on the Aisne.

It was along the Aisne sector, north-west of Rheims, that the war-worn divisions of the 9th British Corps, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir A. Hamilton-Gordon, had been sent for much-needed rest. The 9th Corps, which had been placed at Marshal Foch's disposal, as already mentioned, consisted of the 8th Division, under Major-General W. C. G. Heneker; the 21st Division, under Major-General D. G. M. Campbell;

the 25th Division, under Major-General Sir E. G. Bainbridge; and the 50th Division, under Major-General H. C. Jackson, subsequently reinforced by the 19th Division, under Major-General G. D. Jeffreys. The 8th had fought with magnificent spirit in the anxious days of March, when they



Lieutenant-General Sir A. Hamilton-Gordon, commanding the 9th British Corps
(From a photograph by Bassano)

had sacrificed themselves unsparingly in some of the sternest struggles of the whole war, in this way helping to stem the German tide south of the Somme. Only a month later the same division had borne the brunt of the German attack in the Villers Bretonneaux area. The 21st, which had seen some of the hardest fighting of the war since its "bleeding", years before, in the Battle of Loos, had also sacrificed itself with the noblest courage in the grim rear-guard fighting

which had at length brought the enemy to a halt on the Somme, the Lincolns and Leicesters sharing with many other of its units the glory of countless gallant exploits. The 21st came through this only to be thrust almost immediately afterwards into the Lys Battle, where it continued to live up to its fine reputation. The 25th had also stood the double test of both battles, sharing with the 21st and others the honour of special mention for its share in repulsing the enemy's savage thrust in the Ploegsteert area, when the Portuguese front was broken.

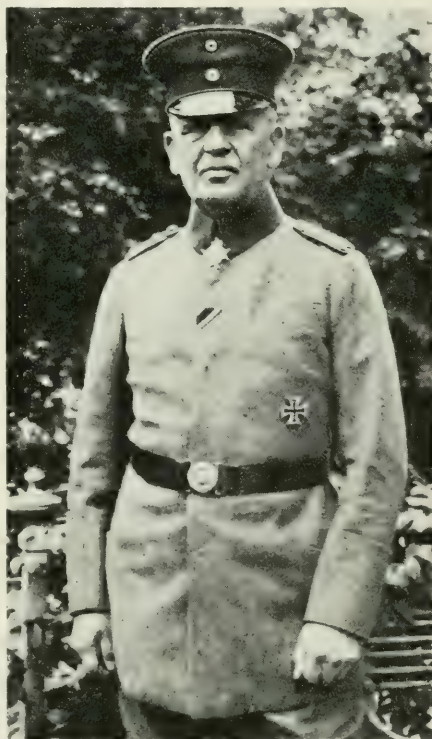
The 50th Division—the North-Country Territorials against whom the enemy was about to launch the full fury of his new attack—had been deeply concerned in the same struggles earlier in the year, winning special mention for its splendid endurance when the enemy was making his last reckless bid for the Channel ports. The 19th Division, which subsequently reinforced them, was made of the same stuff, and held similar records. "All", as Sir Douglas Haig pointed out, "had but lately been filled up with young drafts, and, despite their high spirits and gallant record, were in no condition to take part in major operations until they had had several weeks' rest."

During the first fortnight of May, three of them—the 50th, the 21st, and the 8th—were put into line on a front of about 15 miles astride the Aisne, between Bermericourt and Bouconville, north-west of Rheims, with the French armies under General Pétain. On their left were French veterans of the

Sixth Army—Bretons, Vendéans, and Normans—guarding the main stretch of the famous Chemin-des-Dames. On their right, carrying the line down to Rheims, was a crack division of French Colonials. Like the British in their midst, all had earned, and sadly needed, the quiet spell which it had been hoped they would obtain along this historic battle-ground, which had cost the French several months, and countless lives, to recapture a year before. Its natural defences were so great that it was considered hardly likely that the Germans, with all their commitments elsewhere, would choose this arena, of all others, for renewing the struggle. Yet this, because of its very unlikelihood, was exactly what Ludendorff meant to do.

The British General Staff, as already mentioned, had always held the view that Ludendorff's next big attack would be somewhere on the southern flank of the Allied armies, but it was not until May 26 that the French received, from German prisoners, the first definite information regarding the violent blow which had been fixed for the morrow. No one, even then, dreamt that this was destined to win back, in a few hours, all that the French had taken and held at such cost in the previous year. Whatever the enemy's real objective—whether, as some critics maintained, it was planned from the first as a fresh attempt to advance on Paris itself along the historic routes down the valleys of the Oise and the Marne, on the top of another tidal wave; or was merely designed to use up Foch's reserves and pave the way for the decisive

blow which the French expected on the Arras-Amiens-Montdidier front—the new venture was prepared with the same thoroughness as in Ludendorff's dramatic attack on March 21, and with every element of surprise. Again he chose a sector thinly held by troops comparatively new to the ground, and only at the last moment were his specially trained forces, including the very divisions of Prussian Guards which had led the advance on the Somme, brought into position. Moved forward from long distances with all possible secrecy, and with the utmost swiftness—rushed up by train-loads under cover of night—they were massed against the front of the Sixth French Army, to which the British



General von Böhn, who delivered the main German blow on the Aisne



General von Hutier, commanding the German army on the right of the advance on the Aisne

9th Corps was attached, on a front of about 35 miles north-west of Rheims. Many additional batteries of guns, an unsuspected concentration of aeroplanes, and the biggest fleet of Tanks that the Germans had ever brought into action, were employed in the same way.

At one o'clock on May 27, along the whole of the "Ladies' Way" and the slopes astride the Aisne, the long deceptive quiet, which had made the Laon plateau a resting-place for the Allies' worn divisions, was abruptly broken by an artillery and trench-mortar bombardment of indescribable intensity. The Allies, it is true, had been forewarned, but only on the very eve of the assault, and no time remained to avert the threatened disaster. The British divisions, with the French on their right and left, were

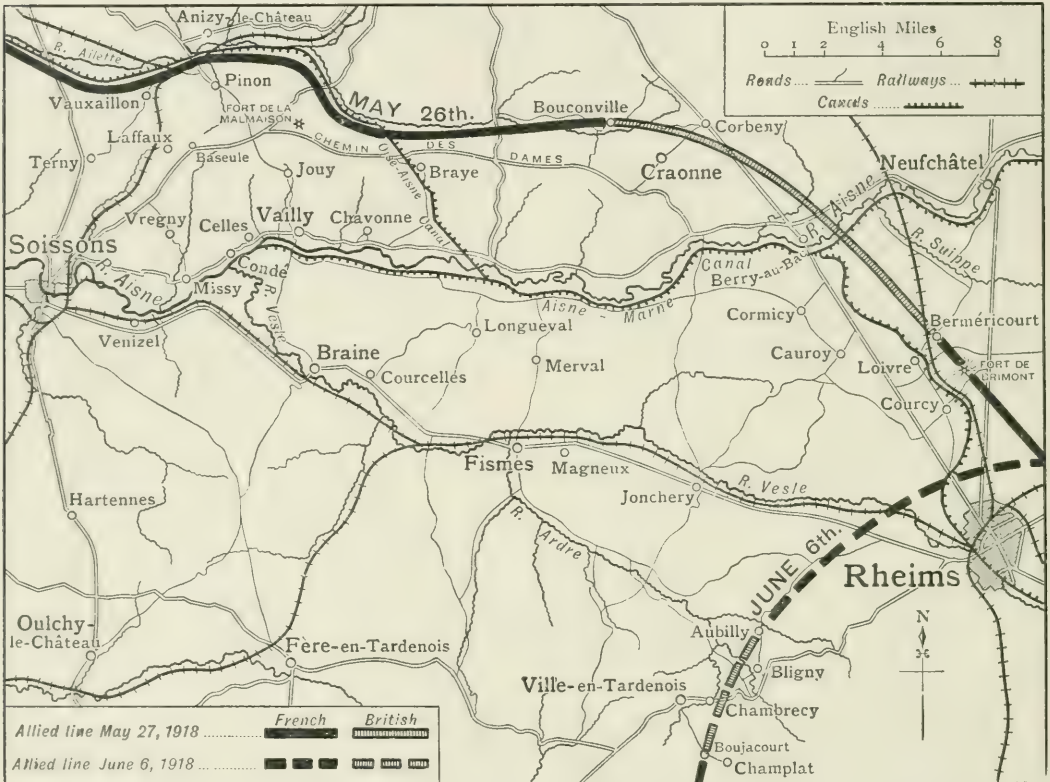
outnumbered 5 and 6 to 1 by the pick of the German storm-troops, even before the high-explosive shells, trench-mortars, and poison-gas had taken their heavy toll in the preliminary bombardment. Yet our splendid infantry, many of them young drafts in action for the first time in their lives, fought a hopeless battle with the dogged courage which had helped so largely to stem the German tide both on the Somme and the Lys.

The wooded heights of the Aisne, along which the Chemin-des-Dames runs from Laffaux, above Soissons, to Craonne, the eastern stronghold of the "Ladies' Way", has already been described in our chapter on Nivelle's costly victory in the spring of 1917. Ludendorff's attack fell to the group of armies designated as those of the German Crown Prince, the main blow being delivered by the army of General von Böhn, with von Hutier's army on his right, and von Below's on his left, covering Rheims. Altogether some 28 German divisions were employed on the 35-mile front, extending from Bremont, north-west of Rheims, to Vauxaillon, north-east of Soissons. The German onrush began at day-break in a thick fog. The bombardment had only lasted three or four hours, but it had been nerve-shattering. Advancing, as usual, in their dense mass formation the storm-troops were accompanied not only by the Tanks, but also by great numbers of low-flying aeroplanes, which bombed and machine-gunned the Allies' positions wherever they could get at them. German aeroplanes, be it added, had scarcely been seen on this front for

some time past, and the temporary command of the air which they held in this region, and maintained for several days, played no small part in the enemy's success.

As for the Tanks, no one expected that the Germans could put such a

Country Territorials of the 50th Division and the French on their left that the full weight of the blow was most severely felt. It fell with equal force on the British divisions on their right, though here, in places, the difficulties of the ground, together with the Allied



Map showing the approximate position of the Allied Line north-west of Rheims before the German attack of May 27, 1918, and the position of the Allied Line west of Rheims on June 6, 1918

powerful fleet into the field. One account asserted that there must have been 100 of them on the Bouconville-Craonne sector of the British front alone. This sector constituted the British left, held by the 50th Division, with the 8th forming the British centre about Berry-au-Bac, and the 21st the British right towards Bermericourt. It was along the front of the North-

batteries behind them, enabled the defence to hold out longer. But, at the best, it was a terrible ordeal for all the troops concerned. The 8th British Division, linking up with the right of the 50th, held an outpost line between Craonne and Berry-au-Bac, which they were told to hold to the last; an order which was carried out to the letter. In the battle zone itself

the Germans pierced the line held by the 8th in a dense fog almost before they were discovered. The Berkshires fought with the utmost stubbornness for some hours, together with reinforcements from the Lancshires, but the survivors were eventually forced to retire when the rest of the troops fell back across the river to Bermericourt.

West Yorkshires, Sherwood Foresters, Wiltshires, and Cheshires all earned high praise for their gallantry on the same occasion in as testing an experience as ever fell to the lot of British troops. It was recorded at the time that the general in command on their right, suddenly finding the enemy on his flank and rear, gathered his staff together, and charging through the surging crowd of hostile troops—killing not a few of them as he did so—escaped in the nick of time. The 25th Division was hurried forward in support, but before it could save the situation, the 21st Division, which continued the British line until it linked up with the French Colonials covering Rheims, had been forced out of its most vital points, after defending them with the utmost bravery, and the 8th was obliged to withdraw in conformity with the new line.

Along the whole centre of the advance, indeed, the Franco-British position was hopeless from the first. The Territorials of the 50th fought with all their traditional pluck and endurance. When the tidal wave broke over their thin line, their field-guns and trench mortars were kept in action to the very last minute—in many cases until the weapons were

blown up or destroyed, as the crews, firing on the advancing enemy with revolvers, fell back with the remnants of the infantry. A counter-attack on Craonne was attempted, but it was only a forlorn hope in the face of the enemy's immensely superior strength. Outnumbered as they were, and repeatedly taken in flank by enfilading machine-guns and Tanks, French and British alike were forced back in sullen retreat.

Once the German centre, regardless of the cost, had stormed the Chemin-des-Dames, it was impossible to prevent a clean sweep of the slopes leading down to the Aisne. By mid-day the enemy had reached the Aisne itself, and was already across it in parts farther to the west, when the hard-pressed British divisions, suffering heavily, but making the Germans pay dearly for their gains, arrived on the river's northern bank.

Similar scenes were taking place on the left of the Allied line, where, notwithstanding the fierce French resistance, the line of the Chemin-des-Dames was turned at that end, and the famous Fort de la Malmaison retaken by the enemy early in the day. Storming down the slopes of the Aisne at such a pace that it was impossible to complete the work of blowing up all the bridges in time, the German host swept across the river along the whole centre of his attack. There was a stiff fight for Vailly, and the southern banks of the Aisne were carried only at a heavy price from defending machine-guns; but before nightfall the tide had flowed on until it reached the Vesle,

and was even across that river west of Fismis.

The 9th British Corps, now reinforced by the 25th Division, had been compelled to swing back to a position facing west and north-west between the Aisne and the Vesle. Many stories were afterwards told of individual gallantry, and of dauntless endurance by isolated groups among French and British alike; and of counter-attacks by slender forces against dense masses of on-coming Germans, in order to gain more time for the retiring troops. In the continued withdrawals from the Aisne to the Vesle, when French and British often stood side by side in desperate rear-guard actions, some of the young British drafts found themselves at one spot fighting shoulder to shoulder with labour detachments of old French Territorials. Young and old together fought to the death in this way in Gernicourt Wood, only a few of the Frenchmen escaping, practically all the British being killed or wounded. There was another memorable stand on the Allies' left, where in the Pinon woods, north-east of Laffaux, three French battalions were cut off, but, refusing to surrender, kept the enemy at bay for thirty-six hours, thus, for a time at least, delaying his triumphant march on Soissons. The last that was heard of them was a brief carrier-pigeon message announcing their intention of fighting to the end.

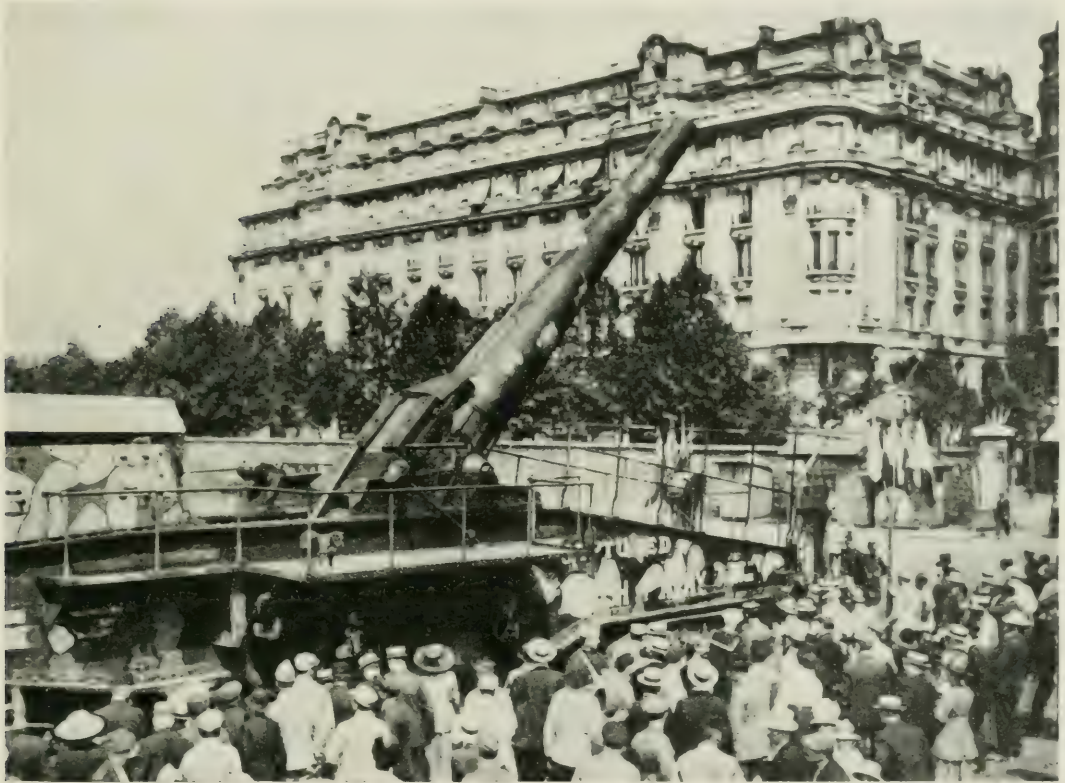
Launching attack after attack in immense force, the enemy pressed his advantage to the full throughout the succeeding days. On the 28th, the German centre, capturing Fismis,

Braisne, and Condé—the fort of which, garrisoned by French Chasseurs, held out with devoted bravery until stormed on all sides by the advancing army—crossed the Vesle with the swiftness with which it had carried the Aisne on the previous day, overwhelming all opposition on the opposite banks. That night the 19th British Division was brought up in 'buses, and put in to fill the gap in the French line across the Ardre valley. By this time the 9th British Corps, greatly reduced in numbers by severe and incessant fighting, and forced, like the French, to withdraw across the Vesle, had been gradually pressed back thence in a south-easterly direction between the Vesle and the Ardre.

Foch reserved his stoutest resistance for the flanks, but could not save Soissons, which once more fell into the enemy's hands on May 29, following the capture of the Vregny plateau. The enemy had poured shells into Soissons on the previous day, and the town was on fire in places. The French fought hard to save the place, winning it back after losing it early in the day, and again being driven out by sheer weight of numbers. That day, the German Higher Command claimed 25,000 prisoners since the beginning of the offensive, as well as immense quantities of booty, including twenty of the heavy guns which the French had brought up by rail to use against "Big Bertha" and "Little Bertha", the long-range guns with which the enemy at this time was dropping shells into Paris. While extending his right wing in order to envelop Soissons, he brought

fresh reserves up at the same time and extended his left, so that it formed what was practically a semicircle round the devoted city of Rheims, guarded by General Berthelot's Fifth Army, with Gouraud's army holding the Champagne front on its right.

losses. Foch, however, was too astute to disclose his hand. Holding the Germans on the wings with his local reserves, and allowing them to overwhelm territory which became more perilous to themselves the farther they advanced, he waited patiently



One of the German Long-range Guns, captured by the Australians, and exhibited in Paris

Flushed with a success which was loudly proclaimed by the enemy as far greater than he had hoped, he proceeded to exploit it with every means at his disposal. He assured his own troops that Foch's strategic reserves no longer existed, and that the Allies were rapidly coming to the end of their resources before the Americans could make good their

for his own hour to strike. It was no bad omen that it was on this same field of the Marne, which was luring the German host to its doom, that the first triumphant rush of the enemy was held and flung back in the autumn of 1914.

May 30 found the Germans still plunging headlong into the fatal "pocket". French resistance stiffened

still further on the wings, the Allies on the right, including the British divisions of the 9th Corps, maintaining their hold round Rheims, the French on the left clinging equally firmly to the outlets of Soissons. In the centre, however, the tide swept on from the Vesle across the Ardre and the Ourcq until it changed from a wedge-shaped advance into a U-shaped depression, with the U lengthening more precariously every hour. By nightfall, the enemy had swept past Fère en Tardenois, and on the following day reached the north bank of the Marne on a 10-mile front, from Dormans to Château Thierry. Though the rate of advance in the British sector had begun to slacken, intense fighting continued throughout the next few days. The battered division of the 9th Corps now formed part of the Fifth French Army, under the command of General Berthelot, and had gradually withdrawn to the line Aubilly-Chambrecy-Boujacourt, where they were able to consolidate and play a large part in repulsing the enemy's attack on the north-eastern side of Rheims.

It was on May 31, when the German tide was flooding the northern banks of the Marne, that the American troops arrived on the scene, reinforcing the French who were blocking the way to Paris along the road from Château Thierry. The Americans began to count more and more in these decisive stages of the struggle. They were to show their mettle on the British front on July 4, when, as described on pp. 81-83, they helped the Australians to retake Hamel; and already on May 20, on another sector

of the French line, they had captured the Cantigny salient, north-west of Montdidier, with conspicuous gallantry and skill, working in conjunction with the Allied Tanks. This was the first conspicuous occasion since the United States entered the war on which the American troops had taken the initiative in attack.

The American reinforcements at Château Thierry now gave the Germans a taste of their quality in defence. For months past the enemy's Higher Command had affected to disregard the newcomers as a fighting force, General von Stein boasting about this time in the Reichstag that the Americans were only wasting their strength—they had come too late to be of any use to the French, he added. They soon gave the lie to this on the Marne. Taking over defensive positions along the south bank of the river, from Château Thierry as far as Jaulgonne, where they linked up with a French Colonial division, they were soon hotly engaged, preventing the enemy from crossing the Château Thierry bridge on the very day of their arrival, and forcing him back into the northern portion of the town abandoned by the French on the previous day. Foiled in this direction, as well as south of Soissons on the road to Villers-Cotterets, where French cavalry and other reinforcements blocked the way with heroic resistance, the Germans now extended the attack on their right wing as far as the Oise by flattening out the French salient between Soissons and Noyon on the Ailette front, the Allies falling back under the devastating

storms of poison-gas, fire, and high-explosives to new defensive positions extending from the Bois de Carlepont front, through Moulin-sous-Touvent and Vingre, to Fontenoy on the Aisne. At the close of that day (May 31) the Germans claimed that their captures then totalled no fewer than 45,000 prisoners, 400 guns, and thousands of machine-guns.

Hard and continuous fighting continued for several days along the enlarged battle-front, now covering a distance of about 80 miles, from the Oise to Rheims. Here and there the Germans slightly improved their positions, but for the time being at least the high-water mark of their success had been reached. On the Allies' left they gained and they lost ground about Soissons and on the Chaudin-Vierzy line; and though they reached the fringe of the Villers-Cotterets Forest they were held up there by its impenetrable defences. On the Allies' right they failed repeatedly to tighten their grip round Rheims. La Pompelle Fort (4 miles south-east of that city), which had been captured by the Germans at the beginning of March, only to be recovered a few hours later by the French, went through an exactly similar process on June 1, the French victors on this occasion crowning their success by capturing four German Tanks and 200 prisoners. Along this eastern flank of the salient the British divisions, now firmly consolidated, had done yeoman service in preventing the Germans from following up their initial advantage.

"Though", wrote Sir Douglas Haig, "the enemy's attacks continued persistently for

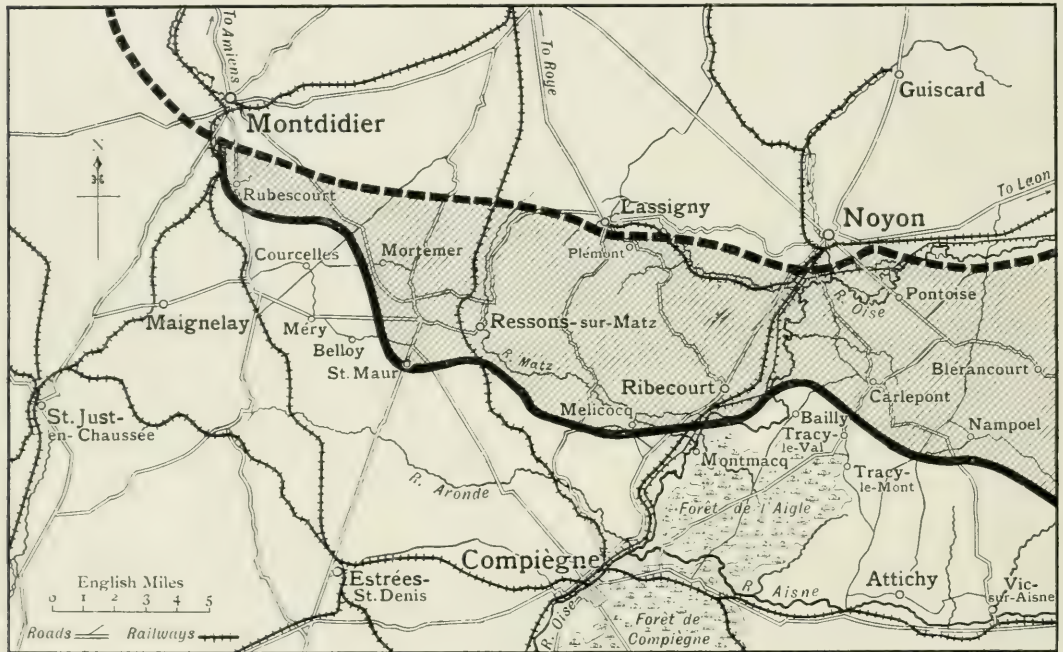
some time longer, and on the 6th June culminated in two determined attempts upon the important position known as Montagne de Bligny, which commands the valley of the Ardre, all these attacks were most gallantly repulsed, and the enemy's advance definitely stayed."

Throughout this long period of incessant fighting against heavy odds the behaviour of all arms of the British forces engaged had been superb. What they achieved is best described in the words of General Berthelot, commanding the French army to which they were now attached, who wrote of them: "They have enabled us to establish a barrier against which the hostile waves have beaten and shattered themselves. This none of the French who witnessed it will ever forget." The defeat of the Germans at Bligny on June 6 was a fine feather in the cap of the hard-bitten British 19th Division, which was holding the line at the time with a French division on its left. The Germans, attacking with three of their crack divisions on a 4-mile front from above the village of Sainte-Euphraise, about a mile north-east of Champlet, stormed the village of Bligny at 8.15 a.m., and would have consolidated an important gain but for the stalwart defence of the British on the Montagne de Bligny to the west. Repeated attempts to rush the hill were repulsed with sanguinary losses, until the defenders, finding themselves in an acute angle between cross fires, temporarily abandoned it, a bayonet charge by the Cheshires and Shropshires afterwards restoring the situation, and leaving the position securely re-established in our posses-

sion. The French, on their right, recaptured the outskirts of the village itself at the same time; and next morning, when the place was wholly recovered, the old Allied line was consolidated anew.

That the Germans were fully alive to the growing danger of the trap into

step towards the final advance on Paris. Foch, however, had long been fully prepared for some such an attempt on the enemy's part to support his thrust westwards towards the French capital; and when General von Hutier's "shock" troops advanced after the now customary short but



Map showing (by the shaded area) the limit of the German gains in the Montdidier-Noyon Sector during June, 1918

which the lure of the Marne had drawn them was also evident from their persistent efforts to roll back General Mangin's Tenth French Army on the Soissons-Thierry front. Failing to win the necessary elbow-room either here or on the Rheims side, they launched a new offensive with Von Hutier's armies on June 9 on the 22-mile front from Montdidier to Noyon. Their objective in this case was Compiègne, as another important

shattering bombardment—replied to immediately by a strong counter-artillery preparation—they had to face a very different volume of fire from that which was available against them on the Aisne heights on May 27.

General Humbert commanded the French line in this sector, and his forward positions, as invariably happened when the advanced zone was attacked in sufficient strength on either side, were overwhelmed by superior

numbers, but only at fearful cost to the enemy. Beginning, however, with fourteen divisions at full strength, including a division of Prussian Guards and other crack corps, the main assault took a good deal of stopping, making, as in the Aisne advance, its most rapid progress in the centre, where the French were obliged to fall back some 4 or 5 miles below Lassigny, the enemy's principal progress being along the valley of the Matz as far as Ressons. Next day the Germans swept forward in this direction to the valley of the Aronde; but now they came in contact with the French reserves, who hurled them back in counter-attack. It was a day of appalling carnage.

"Time after time", wrote one correspondent, "the great masses of von Hutier came on, only to be mown down by waves of fire from the seventy-fives and machine-guns, and their remnants dispersed with the bayonet and grenade."

French Tanks played a great part in thus bringing the German advance to a standstill, while fleets of aeroplanes, British as well as French, swept down upon the battle-field in similar support.

On the third day of the new offensive (June 11) Foch finally spoiled this chapter of von Hutier's career by a great counter-thrust against his vulnerable flank, which served, in its way, as a rehearsal for the decisive stroke in the Marne salient in the following month. The rapid advance in the centre had left the enemy's right exposed, and the French Generalissimo was quick to seize his advantage.

His counter-attack, on a 7-mile front from Rubescourt to St. Maur, speedily recovered the village of Belloy, and, advancing nearly a mile and a half beyond Méry, which had been lost and won again in the bitter fighting of the preceding day, regained the plateau between Courcelles and Mortémér. As it happened, the French assault had forestalled a fresh German attack in the same region, and, accompanied as it was by great numbers of the new light French Tanks—speedier and deadlier machines than those of the original type—poured death and destruction among the concentrated masses of German troops.

Courcelles, which was thus saved by the French in the nick of time, furnished one of the many heroic episodes in the new German offensive. Here, as at Plémont, south-east of Lassigny, the troops defending the advanced zone kept the enemy at bay until they were entirely surrounded. At Plémont the dismounted cavalry who held that stronghold had repulsed no fewer than fourteen attacks in the first phase of the German advance, and held out until the whole of the forward zone had been penetrated, when a handful of total survivors cut their way back. At Courcelles the French defenders held out long after they were surrounded; lost the place and won it again; and were still clinging to it when the tide turned on July 11 and relieved them.

On the following day (June 12) the French still further improved their positions on their left near Belloy and St. Maur, adding 400 prisoners to the 1000 which they had captured on the

previous day. Von Hutier retaliated in the centre and on his own left as well as he could. His troops on the southern side of the Matz won Melicocq, and, though they lost it again the same day, their advance in this direction forced the French to give up their salient south of Noyon, whence they retired to the line guarding Bailly-Tracy-Le Val, to a point in rear of Nampoel. With variations in the line here and there, however, this marked the limit of the enemy's successes in his new offensive. The gains had been out of all proportion to the magnitude of the effort, and the sudden collapse after this sustained drain on Ludendorff's remaining mass of manœuvre proved disastrous to all his ambitious plans.

Ludendorff's hopes now centred, for the time being, in his Austrian Allies, whose great attack on the Italian front, from the Asiago plateau to the sea, launched on June 15, just as the new blow on the French front had been brought to a standstill, would, if all went well, help to disperse Foch's reserves.

Meantime, on the flanks of the Marne salient, the enemy had been growing more and more restless, as the failure to relieve the situation from the north became every day more pronounced. On the 12th, as if to disguise the fact that von Hutier could make no further progress on the new battle front, von Böhn was set the task of creating a diversion between the Aisne and the Villers-Cotterets Forest. Five German divisions were here thrust in with the object of pushing into this forest outpost of the French capital—40 miles away—

but though vastly superior in strength to the French troops defending it, the progress which they made was infinitesimal. There was stubborn fighting for Dommiers and other villages on the fringe of the forest, but the only German gains worth mentioning were the hamlets of Couvres and St. Pierre Aigle. Even Couvres was snatched back three days afterwards, leaving them less than ever to show for their wasted effort.

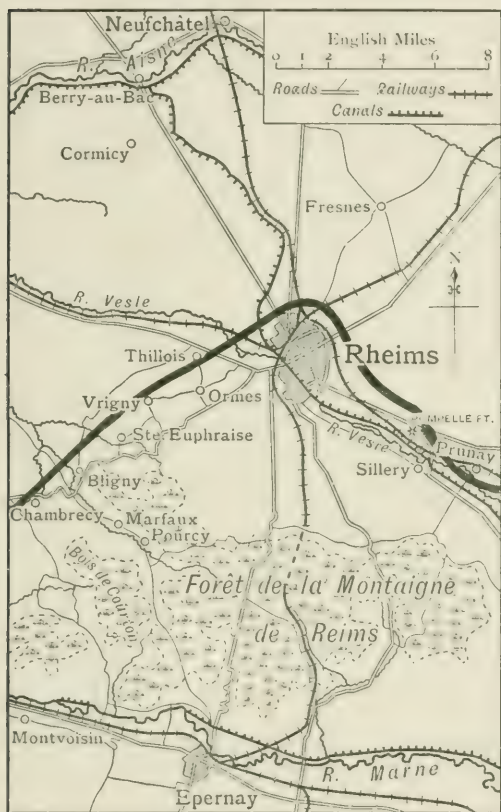
At the other end of the Villers-Cotterets Forest, in the Clignon valley, American troops now joined the French in maintaining a pressure which the German Higher Command must have found extremely annoying, in view of its repeated efforts to decry the fighting value of the new arrivals from across the Atlantic. The Americans had already followed up their successful appearance on the scene at Château Thierry—where, it will be remembered, they had helped to bar the road to Paris at the end of May—by the telling part which they had played at Jaulgonne on June 4, when the Germans, after succeeding in establishing a bridge-head on the south side of the Marne at this point, were flung back with heavy losses. It was estimated that at least a thousand dead were left by the enemy along the roads near the bridge after the American machine-gunners and French cavalry had forced the Germans back. On the western side of Château Thierry, where the struggle for the beautiful valley of the Clignon continued with grim obstinacy day after day, and almost yard by yard, the Americans came to know what forest fighting

meant with all the murderous devices of modern warfare.

June must have been a gloomy month for the German Higher Command. Ludendorff regretted his lost legions, as he looked in vain for a ray

Piave, was to make another bid for Rheims on the evening of June 18. The attack was delivered at 9 p.m. on that occasion with three divisions of von Below's First German Army, who, ordered to take the city at all costs that night, advanced after three hours' violent bombardment of the whole Rheims front, from the region of Vigny on the west to beyond La Pompelle on the east. Round Rheims itself, now little more than a vast heap of ruins dominated by the battered mass of the old cathedral, the Germans, already sorely tried by the French counter-preparation fire, blundered in the dark against cunningly-concealed defences, and paid the penalty without scoring a single success. On the east some progress was made for a time near the fort of La Pompelle, an entry being forced into a wood north-east of Sillery, but the invaders were soon driven out again by a vigorous counter-attack. On the west, between Vigny and Ormes, the German storm troops, caught by a withering shell fire, failed even to reach the Allies' wire, and retreated in discomfiture to their own lines. The whole attack, in short, was a dismal fiasco.

A few nights later the Germans endeavoured to make amends for this failure by two attempts on the Montagne de Bligny, the dominating height in the Ardre valley which continued to hamper their operations south-west of Rheims. The Montagne de Bligny, as described on p. 147, had been the scene of the British stand on June 6, when the Cheshires and Shropshires of the 9th Corps won the position back at the point of the



Map showing the approximate position of the Allied Line round Rheims before—and after—the German attack on June 18, 1918

of light from the Italian front, where the last Austrian hopes were being crushed, and the brilliant inauguration had begun of the succession of Allied triumphs which was to lead to the total collapse of the Central Powers. The most that he could do to retain the initiative in France while the Italians were holding the Austrians on the

bayonet. An Italian contingent had since taken over this part of the French line, and troops of the Alpine Brigade were holding the hill when the new attack was delivered by three German regiments. At the first onset the enemy succeeded in rushing the position, but was almost immediately thrust back again after losing heavily in the struggle. The attack was renewed on the following night, and this time the Germans suffered an instant repulse, the Italians being heartily congratulated on this fine feat of arms at the very moment when their comrades at home were inflicting their crushing defeat of the Austrians on the Piave.

For the rest of the month, and during the first half of July, little occurred to relieve the nervous tension in and around the critical salient on the Marne. Foch, though the long-sustained fighting had naturally put a severe strain on his resources, could afford to wait, with time and the flowing tide of American reinforcements on his side; with the ever-ready British army on his left, now well rested after its herculean labours in the spring; and the rejuvenated Belgian army, stronger than ever, only awaiting the order to advance on his seaward flank. He knew that his reward was in sight after all his patient strategy; that the enemy's vast superiority in numbers, which gave him the initiative on the collapse of Russia, was rapidly vanishing. He merely bided his time now in order to seize the psychological moment for striking with all his might.

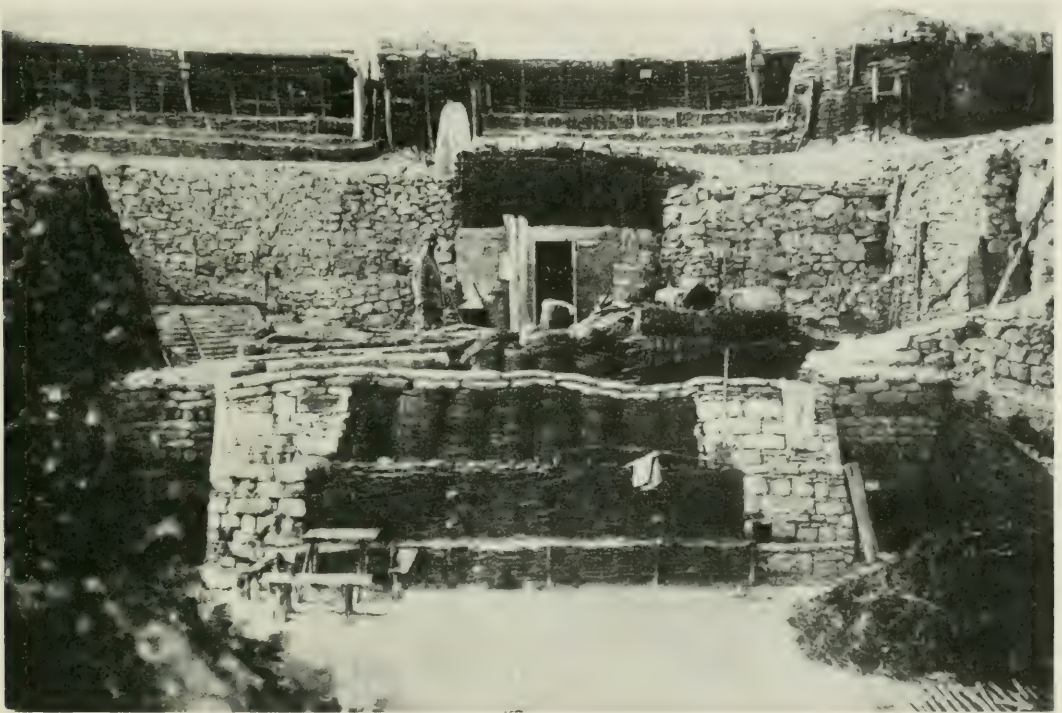
Ludendorff, on his side, was plainly

on the horns of a very painful dilemma. He was too deeply committed to the Marne venture to withdraw at this stage, yet he dared not remain where he was indefinitely, with 300,000 to 400,000 of his best troops in a "pocket" that might be cut off before he could prevent it. The whole position in the salient, in short, was untenable, and since Foch steadily refused to show his hand—contenting himself with recovering in a series of minor enterprises quite important portions of the captured ground—the only alternative was to make one supreme effort to solve the problem, and so justify all his previous losses, by a fresh attack with all his forces on a wide front east and west of Rheims. If this did not burst a way to Paris itself through all these obstinate barriers, it should at least bring him within normal bombarding distance of the capital, and so force a decision before the Americans could muster the bulk of their army in France.

Foch heard of this intention early in July, and was so sure of its reality that he withdrew the whole of the French troops from Flanders for his own front, besides borrowing four fresh British divisions for the same purpose—the 15th, 34th, 51st, and 62nd, constituting the 22nd Corps, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir A. Godley—and requested that four further British divisions might be dispatched to ensure the connection between the French and British armies about Amiens, thus relieving another four French divisions for service on his right flank. Sir Douglas Haig, as explained on

p. 85, loyally agreed to the Generalissimo's proposal, and the four divisions of the 22nd British Corps arrived in time to play a gallant and conspicuous part, side by side with their French comrades, in the great counter-offensive which Foch was now secretly preparing in the depths of the forests

by the enemy. Not the least important part of this constant nibbling process was the steady flow of German prisoners, from whom many scraps of useful information were pieced together regarding the forthcoming battle. The fact that the enemy made little attempt to retaliate at this period,



French Official Photograph

The Battlefield in Champagne: a corner of one of the French first-line trenches

between Soissons and Château Thierry, as well as along other parts of the German salient.

While the new battle was being rehearsed behind the German lines, and the enemy's best troops withdrawn for that purpose, many valuable little gains continued to be made by the Allies between Amiens and the Marne, Foch's confident troops making short work of the inferior units left behind

either in raids or counter-attacks, was in itself suspicious. Ludendorff's alarm at the manner in which his secrets were extracted from those of his troops who fell into the Allies' hands was disclosed in a captured order, issued a few weeks previously, attempting to check this practice.

"One is amazed", he wrote, "to note the accuracy and wealth of detail in the information the French derive from German



prisoners. I request orders to be given for immediate and urgent instructions to be issued to first-line troops, and troops in the rear, as to the conduct they should adopt in the case of capture, by emphasizing to them the shameful character and deadly consequences of such an attitude. Most men who have the misfortune to be taken prisoners, unlike deserters, do not realize how far statements made by them, even about trifles, not only endanger the lives of their comrades but compromise the success of attacks and surprises. The infamous conduct of a few individuals can have very grave results on the victorious issue of the war, and may very seriously prejudice the Fatherland as a whole. The soldier who refuses to speak does honour to himself, preserves his conscience clean in his own eyes and those of his chief and country, and even compels the respect of his adversary."

This order did not prevent Foch and his generals from discovering all that was necessary regarding the forthcoming battle. The renewal of the grand offensive was expected earlier in July than it actually occurred, the weather, for once on the side of the Allies, interfering with Ludendorff's plans. A long spell of sunshine gave place on July 8, when everything was ready for the assault, to nearly a week of heavy rain-storms. General Gouraud, whose army, with whom were associated some of the American troops, held the Champagne front on the right of Rheims, had information that the attack was arranged for the end of the first week in July or the beginning of the next, and issued an appeal to his troops which typifies the spirit of the whole French army, and is one of the historical documents of the war. The text, as

translated at the time by Reuter's Correspondent on the French front, like the extract from Ludendorff's order quoted above, runs as follows:—

"To the French and American Soldiers of the Army:

"We may be attacked from one moment to the other. You all feel that a defensive battle was never engaged in more favourable conditions. We are warned, and we are on our guard. We have received strong reinforcements of infantry and artillery. You will fight on ground which by your assiduous labour you have transformed into a formidable fortress, into a fortress which is invincible if the passages are well guarded. The bombardment will be terrible. You will endure it without weakness. The attack in a cloud of dust and gas will be fierce, but your positions and your armaments are formidable. The strong and brave hearts of free men beat in your breasts. None will look behind, none will give way. Every man will have but one thought—'Kill them, kill them in abundance, until they have had enough'. And therefore your General tells you it will be a glorious day for France."

When at length, on July 15, Ludendorff's last effort was made, with a grand attack on a 50-mile front, extending from Château Thierry to the eastern limit of the old Champagne battle-front—the Main des Massiges—Gouraud had already secured precise knowledge as to the exact moment of its beginning by the most opportune of raids, with the result that the French were able to deluge the German lines with shells half an hour before the enemy's own bombardment began. Nor was this the only surprise which the Lion of the Argonne had prepared for his opponents—General von Einem, the former German Minister

of War, and General von Mudra. Von Einem, with fifteen of his best divisions in the attack, and ten more in support, had confidently counted on overwhelming the Champagne front, east of Rheims, at the very beginning. Success in this sector was essential to the triumph of Ludendorff's whole plan, the opening move of which aimed, with

distances varying from 1 to 2 miles, and including such hard-won strongholds as the Maronvillers crests, leaving only a skeleton force of volunteers behind to face the inevitable bombardment in concrete forts, and to fight to the last to break up the German infantry attack, as far as possible, when it came. These front-line heroes,



Before their Heroic Stand on the Champagne Front: General Gouraud addressing his troops

von Einem and von Mudra's armies on his left, and von Böhn's imperilled army in the Marne pocket on his right, not only to straighten out this perilous salient, but also to envelop the Montagne de Rheims, with, of course, Rheims itself, and secure a wide base for the great push on Paris.

Gouraud, however, all unknown to the enemy, had everywhere abandoned the ground between his first and second positions, separated at

inspired by the personal magnetism of their leader, went cheerfully to what seemed certain death. Each pill-box fort in this zone of sacrifice was supplied with a crate of carrier pigeons, and when the attack developed invaluable information was dispatched by this means regarding every movement and phase of the fight. In some cases the isolated garrisons sent messages back by pigeon post requesting that their own artillery should immediately open

fire on the ground surrounding their strongholds, the German storm-troops having then arrived there in full force. These brave Frenchmen took no thought for their own safety, and their self-sacrifice proved no small factor of the final downfall of the enemy's plans. They were thus caught between their own fire and the hurricane of shells



General von Einem, opposing General Gouraud on the Champagne Front

which preceded the German storm-troops, who no sooner swarmed over the evacuated ground than they were caught in whirlwind blasts from the French positions in rear. Machine-gun fire from the Spartan troops who were still holding out in their strong points added to the enemy's confusion, and revealed the ruse which had upset all their calculations.

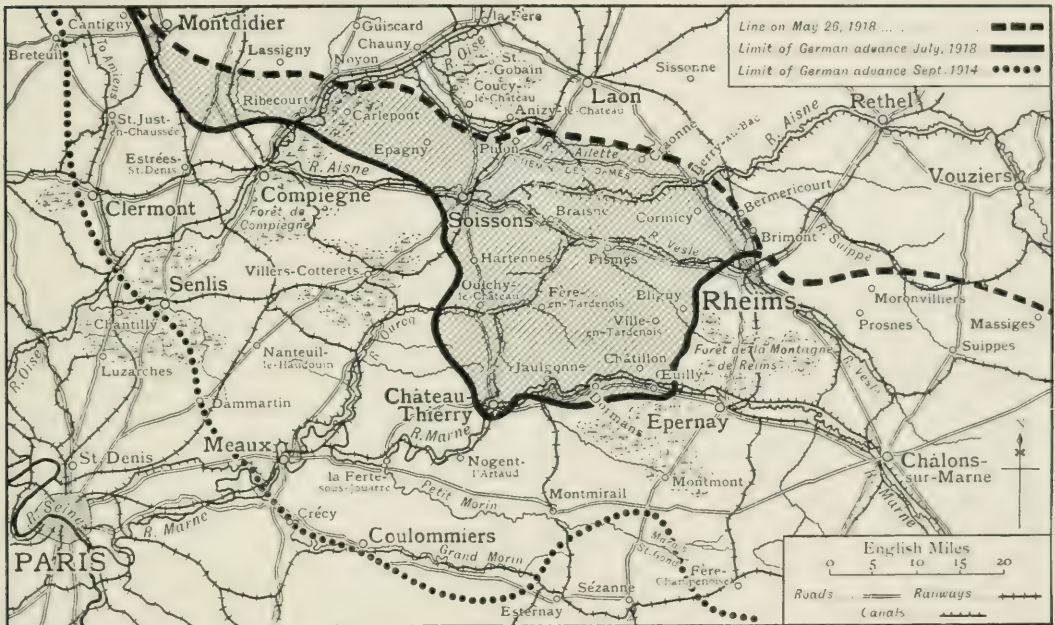
The main French positions were still untouched, and to reach them the

Germans had to run the gauntlet of the murderous storm of shells and machine-gun fire which tore their massed ranks to shreds. The battle was won before they could get to grips with Gouraud's main army. Their master-stroke had wasted itself in the air, and those of the German troops who managed to reach Gouraud's new line were unable to maintain their foothold anywhere. It was estimated that no fewer than 50,000 picked German troops fell that day in front of Gouraud's army. On their opponent's side the casualties were incomparably lighter, and not a single French gun was lost.

The upper arm of the nippers with which Ludendorff had hoped to close like a vice round Rheims having failed thus disastrously, the lower arm lost more than half its strength. The task allotted to von Böhn had been to storm a passage over the Marne and co-operate with the advance on the German left, pushing towards Montmirail and Epernay as his first day's objective. As, however, the advance on the left had failed to materialize, von Böhn's task was jeopardized from the very beginning. The risk had been tremendous in any case, with his precarious lines of communication with Laon, as well as the obvious danger of counter-attack on his vulnerable west flank; but apparently he had been ordered to push beyond the Marne no matter at what cost. While, therefore, in the early hours of July 15, von Einem and von Mudra were violently assaulting the abandoned Champagne line, von Böhn was transporting his storm-

troops and lowering numerous bridges over the Marne. Under cover of smoke-clouds, the enemy, eight divisions strong, succeeded in crossing the river at a number of points between Fossoy and Dormans, and furious struggles ensued on the southern side, in the region of Reuilly-

the long - contested Montagne de Bligny, were gradually wrested from them, and the Allied line was here eventually forced back a distance of 3 or 4 miles. Rushing up fresh forces, the Germans redoubled their efforts to the south-west of Rheims on the following day, hoping to enlarge



The First and Last Advances on Paris: map showing approximately (by the shaded area) the limit of the German gains in the final phase of Ludendorff's offensive in 1918, and (by the dotted line) the limit reached in the 1914 advance

Courthiezy-Vassy, for the heights commanding the valley. Some of these positions fell into the enemy's hands, but a vigorous counter-attack by American troops drove back the Germans who had reached the southern bank to the west of Fossoy.

Between Dormans and Rheims, French and Italian troops fought magnificently against superior numbers, but their first positions, between the Ardre and the Marne, including

their gains in this direction, and so atone for the failure on their left, where the bulk of von Einem and von Mudra's troops, too exhausted by the hopeless struggle of the previous day, made no serious attempt to renew the battle. Von Mudra's reserves, indeed, were now transferred to the Marne salient, together with powerful reinforcements from the Crown Prince of Bavaria's armies, in the vain hope of yet snatching victory

in the "Friedensturm" which Ludendorff had promised them should be the triumphant prelude to peace.

Everywhere, however, their efforts were in vain. Though they soaked the banks of the Marne with their blood, and their dead could be numbered by the thousand in the Courton Wood and other forest outskirts of the Montagne de Rheims, they merely added to their heavy sacrifices on this and other parts of the battle-front. Such restricted gains as they made were never worth the price exacted for them. They reached as far as Montvoisin on the road to Epernay, and thrust some three miles south of Dormans, but were only allowed to remain in temporary possession of this limited area south of the Marne long enough to assist Foch's impending flank attack by the waiting armies of Mangin and Dégoutte. On the eve of that fateful event Foch was able to report that the enemy's advance had been definitely checked.

"The battle continued to-day", he telegraphed on July 17, "with unbroken determination on the whole of the front to the west of Rheims. Notwithstanding his efforts, the enemy did not succeed in increasing his advance. Our troops, by their heroic resistance and their incessant counter-attacks, stopped the German thrust after

all the fluctuations of advance and retirement of the day."

The stress of the three-days' battle, following on the exhausting conflicts earlier in the year, had at length strained Ludendorff's resources to



French Official Photograph

The Result of German Bombardment: Rheims Cathedral and environs, 1918

breaking-point. In squandering the sudden superiority in numbers which the collapse of the Russian front had given him, he could not fail to see that the initiative was slipping from his grasp. Ludendorff, in short, had played his last card and lost. Foch's hour had struck.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER VIII

FOCH'S COUNTER-STROKE ON THE MARNE

(July 18–August 2, 1918.)

Marshal Foch's Strategic Plan—Preliminary Sketch of the Direction of the French Flanking Attack in the Marne Salient—The French Front between Soissons and Château-Thierry—Forces of Generals Mangin and Dégoutte—The Surprise of July 18—Gains of the First Day—The Second Day—Pressure by General Mitry south of the Marne—British Divisions on the Aisne River—Three Days' Gains—The German Dilemma—Renewed Pressure by Mangin—Work of the British Divisions at Beugnot and Buzancy—Mangin's Left Wing in Action—Fall of Soissons—The Germans back to the Vesle—Tributes of Berthelot and Mangin to the British Troops.

IN Marshal Foch's principles of war it is laid down that, in the presence of an enemy superior in force, the counter-stroke should be delayed till the enemy's momentum has slackened as the result of his own efforts. It should be delivered, if possible, when, instead of moving forward, he is steadying himself for a new effort, or, if possible, when he is unsteady after a partial failure. These principles were applied by the French Generalissimo in the first counter-stroke which he aimed at the German flank in the Marne salient on July 18, 1918, and which was so immediately successful that its originator was able to follow it up without pause till the German High Command was forced to petition for an armistice, in order that its armies might be rescued from the ruins into which Ludendorff's plan of campaign had fallen.

That plan had been undermined by the resistance of the British Third and Fifth Armies in the last week of March. It was noted at the time by some intelligent critics that the first German effort must of necessity, and by all German canons of strategy, be

the greatest that the German High Command could compass. No subsequent efforts could attain its ponderousness or violence, whatever the measure of success they might attain against forces which, either on account of their weakness or on account of the generalship, good or bad, which guided them, might be forced to give ground before these secondary onslaughts. The mere comparison of the numbers of divisions employed by the Germans in their successive attacks is sufficient to prove the point. In the Somme Battle, by the end of March, in addition to some 10 German divisions engaged against the French, a total of 73 German divisions were engaged—and were fought to a standstill by 42 British infantry divisions and by 3 cavalry divisions. In the Lys battle, prior to April 30, the enemy engaged a total of 42 divisions against 25 British divisions. A certain number on each side had taken part in both battles. These two attacks were in a sense correlative, and in the six weeks from March 21 to April 30 the Germans employed against both British and French forces

a total of 141 divisions. The drop from that, or even from the 42 divisions of the Lys battle, to the 28 divisions employed by the Germans on the Aisne front from Soissons to Rheims, was significant. Evidently they were staggering under the exhaustion of their first great effort, though they

tegic reserves into the fighting-line on that occasion must have been great; counsellors urged the Marshal to act, and critics blamed his hesitation. Taking no heed of either, he remained on the defensive, meeting Ludendorff's successive strokes with the necessary force to render them ineffective, but

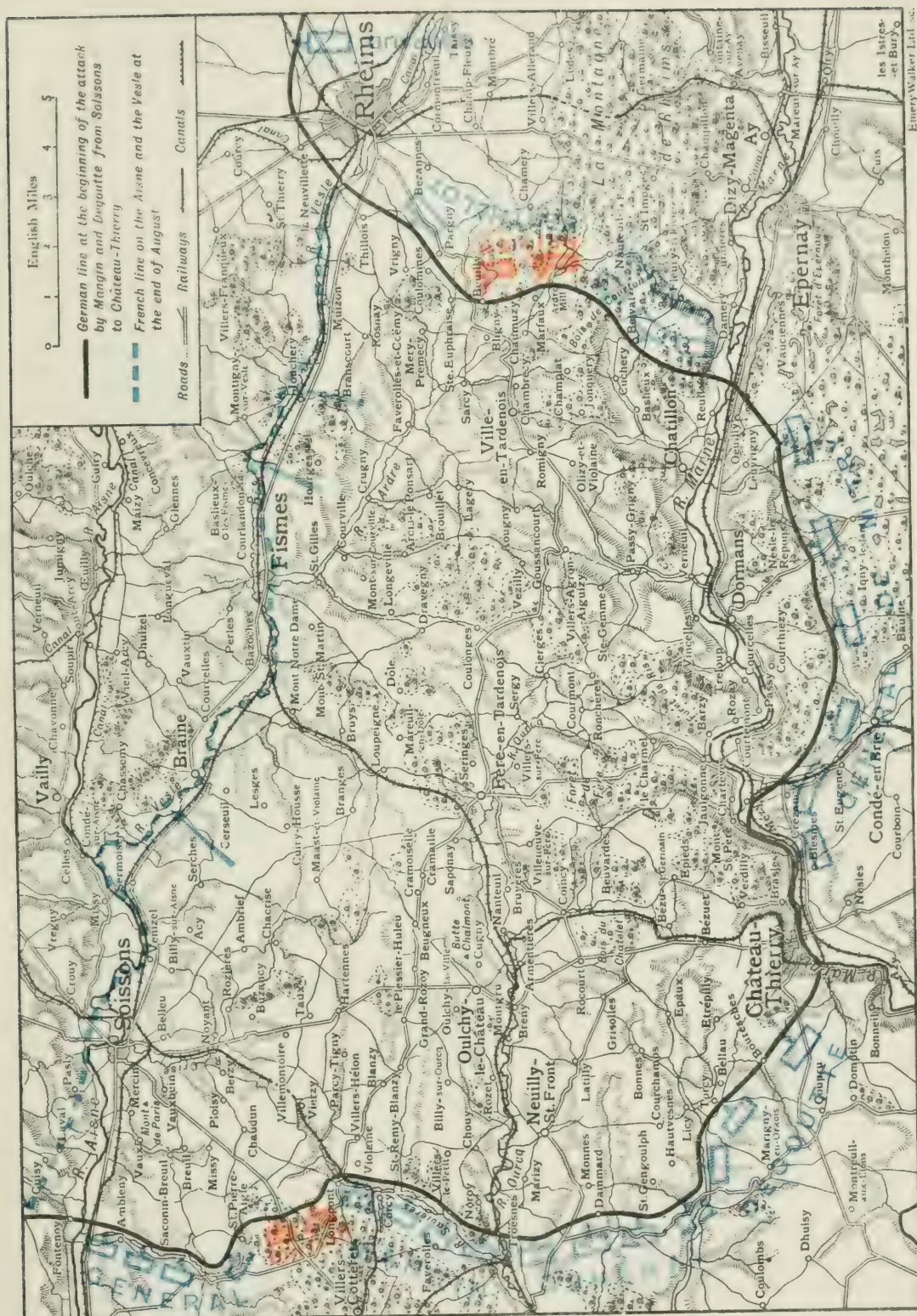


Ambulance Dogs with the French Army: kennels near the front in the north of France

were making an attempt of a desperate kind to force the pace, in the frail hope that the French would crack before they did.

The weight and vigour of the attacks were diminishing, though the loss of the Chemin-des-Dames positions on the Aisne in the May 27 attack was one which was received with disappointment, not unmingled with dismay, in France. To a lesser soldier than Foch the temptation to throw his stra-

reserving his own blow till he felt he could strike home. The value of his method began to be seen by eyes which could discern his mastery in the last attack which Ludendorff (as described in the preceding chapter) launched on a 50-mile front on either side of Rheims. To Ludendorff it must have been painfully obvious, though he was too deeply committed to draw back, for the action of General Gouraud on the eastern side of Rheims



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE "FOCH'S COUNTER STROKE"

mirrored the fabric of the Commander-in-Chief's strategy. Ludendorff must have begun to awaken to the nature of the pit which he had dugged for himself, unless, which is incredible, he believed the German propagandist legend that Foch had no reserves. One reason for crediting him with this blunder of insight is that on the western side of Rheims he continued to deepen the salient he had made, by crossing the Marne without protecting his exposed western flank. He may have thought that Foch's hour would not yet strike; the other salients which Ludendorff had created, the big one in the Somme area, the smaller one near Givenchy and Festubert in the Lys area, enjoyed immunity from attack, though the German positions invited it; and while he was obliged continually to renew his own attacks at various parts of the line, in order to retain the initiative and keep Foch and Haig too much occupied to take advantage of the openings he offered to them, he may have believed that they were too obtuse, or too feeble, to take them when offered. As events showed, he had, in mid-July, put his head into the lion's mouth once too often.

A summary of General Foch's tactics, prefacing the account of the actions fought by the armies he set in motion, may serve to make them better understood. The Second Battle of the Marne, as the crossing by the Germans of this river and their enforced retreat from it have been called, was in truth won by the French after the first day's fighting, when General Gouraud defeated General von Einem's

attack east of Rheims. General Gouraud's victory determined the fate of the offensive, and General von Böhn pushed farther south over the Marne at peril to his communications with Laon, which, across the stretch of country between the Aisne and the Marne, were none too good. The peril became more than that when General Foch struck at the west face of this deep salient between Soissons (north) and Château Thierry (south), a distance of 27 miles, with two armies which had been assembled for this purpose under General Mangin (north) and General Dégoutte (south). On the morning of the 18th the two French armies were facing the Germans on the line Ambleny-Longpont-Troesnes-Bouresches. On the first day of the battle General Mangin rushed through the German positions and seized the heights which overlook Soissons, on either side of the road leading to Villers-Cotterets. South of the River Ourcq, half-way down the face of the salient, General Dégoutte pushed forward to the line Marizy-Belleau.

The next day (19th) General Mangin held on to the plateau overlooking Soissons, and swung his right wing over the Aisne tributary, the Savieres River, till it was well past Vierzy-Villers - Helon. Dégoutte's army, striding forward at the same rate, occupied a line south of the Ourcq, parallel with Neuilly and Courchamps. The Germans now took fright, or took warning, and began feverishly to try to stave off the blows hammering in their salient. On the 20th the German resistance became pronounced,

but the French advance continued, and by the evening the French battle-front extended along a line drawn parallel to the road from Soissons to Château Thierry, and about a mile west of it, thus shutting off the German communications along this important avenue.

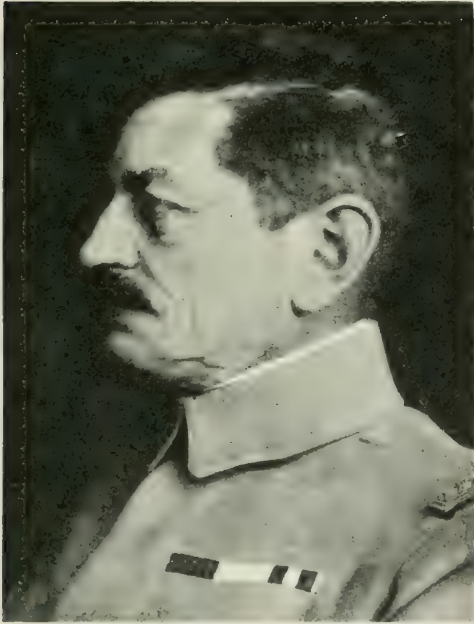
By the morning of July 21 the German generals, von Below and von Böhn, had spread their rear-guard troops all round the salient as well as they were able, their mission being to delay the advance of the armies now pressing them from the south as well as from the west. General Mangin prepared to attack the German position on the Château Thierry road, just north of the Ourcq; south of the Ourcq, General Dégoutte reached the road. Two other forces came into play. American forces pushed eagerly forward on Dégoutte's right, still further narrowing the pocket on its western side, while on the other, the eastern or Rheims side, General Berthelot's army began to press in north of the Marne, assisted by the British force—the 22nd Corps, under General Godley—which did likewise a little farther north along the Aisne River. This pinching pressure on both sides of the salient continued, though it was always the stronger on the western side, where General Foch had disposed the greater part of his striking forces; and by July 27 the German rear-guards began to fall back rapidly all along their front north of the Marne. The movement continued in varying phases till Marshal Foch had flattened out the Marne salient; the sole consolation to Ludendorff, if

there could be consolation for the failure of all his plans, being that he had extricated his armies from the ruinous venture across the Marne, with serious losses, but without complete disaster. The movements may now be considered in greater detail.

Marshal Foch, as explained in the previous chapter, had been withholding his strategic reserves during the German plunge to the Marne. As the pocket deepened he had lined one side of it with forces long designed for such an operation; and when he had broken the force of the German offensive east and west of Rheims on July 15–17, his counter-attack against the pocket's vulnerable side between the Aisne and the Marne only awaited the pressure of his finger on the trigger. Two armies were in waiting for his purpose, one to be employed north of the Ourcq, and commanded by General Mangin, the fighting general who recaptured Douaumont at Verdun. General Mangin after that was conspicuous in the bloody attacks on the Chemin-des-Dames in April, 1917; and his latest command had been on the Montdidier-Noyon front in the preceding month. In these operations Mangin faced von Hutier, whose offensive on the Oise had for its object just that protection of the German flank of von Böhn's army in the Marne pocket which it lacked. If von Hutier had succeeded and had captured Compiègne, and perhaps also Villers-Cotteret, von Böhn's flank would have been safe. It failed; and its failure forced the Germans into the abortive attack east and west of Rheims of July 15–17, and left von

Böhn in a worse position than before. General Dégoutte commanded the army between the Ourcq and the Marne, which contained, as did that of General Mangin, a large number of picked American battalions.

The front of the French attack, between Soissons and Château Thierry,



General Mangin, who led the Attack in Marshal Foch's Counter-stroke on the Marne

Villers-Cotteret forest, a sylvan neighbourhood which in peace-time rings only to the woodman's axe, and east of which lies a country clear of wood, or hill, or dale, or even of good roads. Ideal country for Tanks! South of the Ourcq the countryside is much more intersected by streams, by roads, by railways; but the whole band of country follows the undulations of the road from Château Thierry to Soissons, which, rising from the Marne, dips sharply into the valley of the Ourcq, and then rises more gradually to Soissons. Immediately on the south-west of Soissons is a series of plateaux known as the Montagne de Paris, which dominates the town.

On the morning of July 18 the two French divisions were aligned along the positions Ambleny-Longpont-Troesnes-Bouresches. One piece of fortune the French commanders had. The night preceding their attack was a night of storm: incessant lightning and thunder accompanied torrents of rain, so that, in the words of a French lieutenant, the very heavens seemed to have charged themselves with the task of camouflaging the finishing touches. In the storm the last necessary reinforcements were brought up; the Tanks, which formed such a feature of the attack, were charging up with petrol and moving to their stations when the noise of the thunder-claps was at its highest, and so were able to go on their way unheard. The troops aligned on General Mangin's front, where Tanks were to operate, were picked battalions in good fighting order, though many of them had been in the firing-line since

measures some 27 miles, and its final goal was the almost straight road, bisected at Oulchy-le-Château, which joins the two larger towns. Immediately north of Oulchy lies the high land constituting the watershed between the Aisne and Marne. The country on either side is cut up by innumerable slow streams, with here and there a deeper valley, such as that of the Ourcq, which flows into the Marne. General Mangin's forces were assembled in the fringes of the

March. In the centre a place had been given to American troops, who were thus to have the honour of fighting side by side with the flower of the French infantry. North of the centre British Divisions were to operate. They waited through the night while the tempest roared above them. When day came each was in his appointed place, rifle in hand. Deep silence was in the ranks; one could hear, says a French soldier who was in the waiting ranks, the leaves rustling in the trees. Suddenly, at 4.35, the signal was given, and a new storm was loosed. A cyclone burst in front of the tense lines of soldiers, a cyclone which whirled slowly, regularly, eastwards. It was the barrage. Behind it French and Americans advanced, and ten minutes afterwards they saw running towards them the first German "Kamerads".

In the whole war no surprise on such a length of front had been so complete; it caught the enemy entirely unawares. At some points German officers were still in their beds; at others, German soldiers had been detached to gather the rye crops. It may be that the Germans did not believe that the blow could yet be struck; but something must be said for the jealous care with which the French High Command, and those whom it trusted with the secret, kept it. They had their reward. The advance was of an unexampled rapidity. At some points prudence had to be exercised. Behind Chouy, for example, about a mile north of the Ourcq, the wood called Buissons de Craisne was

strongly held by the enemy with many machine-guns. The French troops marched north and south of it, enclosing it as with a pair of pincers, and afterwards a unit of American infantry, never till then under fire, were detailed to clean it up. When they had finished their job, they brought back with them twenty-nine prisoners—all that remained of the garrison.

The River Savières, which flows into the Ourcq at Troesnes, is a stream with many *marées*, as the French call the regularly-shaped ponds, often stocked with fish, and this was an awkward obstacle; men had to wade breast-high to cross. But the first obstacles were quickly surmounted, and the assaulting lines, well away, having set foot on the plateau, the Tanks passed to the front and took charge. A grandiose spectacle, the French lieutenant already quoted calls it, as the Tanks, trundling forward as if on parade, burst into the ranks of the stupefied enemy, and behind the Tanks the waves of infantry marched—first of all—in review order. After that the advance grew ever more rapid, so rapid, indeed, that a French aviator, who had been brought down by enemy fire, and had fallen in the German lines, was rescued almost before he had had time to gain the shelter of a little wood to which he had fled.

Yet another testimony to the speed of the advance was the silence of the German guns. They had not been given time to re-act; hundreds of artillerymen were captured before they had found time to load. In the Saconin ravine towards Soissons a

number of heavy and light guns were captured almost in the first hour. Villages fell one after another like card castles. At ten o'clock, General Mangin, who had planted his headquarters flag at the foot of a beech, and followed the advance through field-glasses, learnt by 10 o'clock that he held Fontenoy, north of the Aisne, and the plateau of Pernaut south of it; Vaux and the crest south of Mercin (by the Montagne de Paris), Chaudun, Vierzy, Villers Helon, and the wooded undulations thereabouts; the wood to the west of Corcy and Faverolles was held by his troops. By every road and every way, tramping across the cornfields, came long lines of field greys, surrendered Germans, in bands of forties and fifties and hundreds. South of the Ourcq, the troops of General Dégoutte had gone forward with the same success. By 9 o'clock Torcy, Courchamps, and Licy Farm had been taken, and at Courchamps in the afternoon two counter-attacks by German reserves, one from the south-east, and one from the east, were repulsed. By the end of the day General Dégoutte stood on the line Marizy-Hautvesnes-Belleau.

On the 19th General Mangin continued his movement. Holding on to the plateau of Pernaut, south-west of Soissons, he strengthened his position on the Vauxbuin-Chaudun line. Farther to the south German reinforcements were being hurried up. It is said that they were part of an "unfinished" new army, and had recently come from the Ukraine. At Mangin's centre his troops, having firmly secured Vierzy, went on past the Mauloy wood

east of Villers Helon, and took two other villages between there and the Ourcq. They were getting very near the Soissons-Château-Thierry main road. South of the Ourcq, Dégoutte's army occupied the plateau north-west of Monnes, between Dammard and Neuilly-St-Front, as well as the heights north of Courchamps. On the left bank of the Marne the French, steadily pressing back the Germans on the sector where they had crossed between Fossoy and Oeuilly, began to reach the river again. The German *communiqué* of this date (published on Sunday, July 21) is illustrative of the maxim that "when you have a bad case you should abuse the plaintiff's attorney".

"Between the Aisne and the Marne", it ran, "the enemy sought by the employment of fresh divisions to bring about a decision in the battle. *The enemy was repulsed.* He suffered heavy losses. The French subject peoples, Algerians, Tunisians, Moroccans and Senegalese, were at the foci of the fighting, and bore the main burden of the struggle. The Senegalese battalions, which were distributed among the French divisions as battering-rams, stormed behind Tanks in advance of the white Frenchmen; Americans, including black Americans, Englishmen, and Italians fought between the French."

The *communiqué* added that, on the southern bank of the Marne, "the enemy, after four hours' artillery preparation under cover of heavy fire, and with numerous Tanks, made combined attacks against the positions which had been evacuated by us in the previous night". The most truthful statement in that account is that the

Germans had been compelled to withdraw in haste across the Marne behind the shelter of rolling clouds of smoke, leaving their rear-guards to sacrifice themselves for the main body of their comrades.

The Germans came to the decision to retreat on Friday night, and the clouds of smoke which they sent up warned the French of their intention. They had no alternative. Nearly the whole of the Château-Thierry-Soissons road was under French fire; French artillery was in many places between 1 and 3 miles of this German line of communication. They were nearest in the north, but St. Remy, Blancy, and Rozet-St-Albin, which the French had secured, were only 4000 yards away. The German divisions which recrossed the Marne were far from being able to do so "unnoticed by the enemy". On the contrary, their troops suffered an experience of a kind to dismay any soldiers in the world, for night and day the bombing planes of the Allies, at this time growing in numbers and strength, showered explosives on every crossing. "*Leurs soldats étaient vraiment en l'enfer*", wrote a French correspondent, and the expression was justified.

On Saturday night the Germans pressed west and south of Château Thierry, and, threatened by Franco-American troops on the north as well, evacuated the town, which thenceforth became the pivot of the French advance. Dégoutte's army passed beyond the town and occupied Etrepilly, 3 miles north of it, on Sunday morning (21st). At the same time the French army south of the Marne,

under General Mitry, occupied the double loops of the Marne between Fossoy and Charteves, enough to ensure a firm bridge-head. The Germans in the Château Thierry corner, had, by the end of the day, fallen back to the line Bézu-Mont-St-Père. General Mangin's army north of the Ourcq made slower but substantial progress to the Château Thierry road, and, having passed Vierzy, pressed on towards Villemontoire. At Vierzy the Germans had put up their best fight so far. The village was captured by Americans, was lost in a counter-attack, and yet again taken. That a counter-attack was attempted by the Germans was probably due to the presence among the six divisions in this sector of several which were "resting" after their exertions on the Montdidier-Noyon front in June, and among which was the 6th Brandenburg Division. The Brandenburgers had been commended two years before for their attack on Douaumont; it was a curious accident of war that brought them again into collision with the general who retook that ruined fortress for France. Farther south General Mangin advanced to the line Parcy-Billy-sur-Ourcq.

In addition to the armies of Mangin, Dégoutte, and Mitry, pressing the collapsing salient on west and south, a new pressure was now exerted on the eastern side of it, between the Marne and Rheims, by Franco-British troops and Italian battalions. The action of the British troops may conveniently be summarized separately. Two divisions, the 51st (Major-General Carter Campbell) and the 62nd (Major-

General W. P. B. Braithwaite), began the attack in conjunction with the French on the 20th of July. The sector assigned to the British troops covered a front of 5 miles astride the Aisne River, a region which consisted of an open valley bottom with steep wooded slopes on either side. Both valley and slopes were studded with villages and hamlets, which were for the most part intact and afforded excellent cover for the Germans. It was on this front that for ten days the British—like their comrades of the 9th Corps in the earlier operations following the Aisne battle—were engaged in continuous fighting of the most difficult and trying nature.

The British divisions of the 22nd Corps had arrived on the night of the 19th with some expectation of having to fight a defensive action. Since, if the Germans had to retreat from the Marne, this strongly defended and defensible position was one which they would utilize as a base for a counter-attack of their own in order to relieve their centre between Oeuilly and Fossoy. The German 123rd Division, which was in this sector, had already suffered from some brisk and damaging encounters with the Italians, who had relieved the battered troops of the 9th British Corps here. The Mangin-Dégoutte *coup* on the German right flank changed the situation in a day, and the fresh British divisions found themselves sent forward in an offensive action on the morning of the 20th, the Italians opening out to let them through. The Scottish division on the left was first in action, and ran up against very strong machine-gun

positions. But both the Scottish and the English division on their right made good progress. They were opposed by the 86th, 123rd, 103rd, and 102nd German Divisions. The British wiped out what the Italians had left of the 123rd Division, and this and the 86th were subsequently relieved by the 50th Division—a “shock” division. The prisoners we took were much astonished to find themselves against British troops.

The German High Command had realized none too soon the blunder of their advance, and set themselves with all the energy they could command to retrieve what they could. Unless the war were to be ended on the Marne—as some critics had maintained that it had been in substance ended in 1914—it was necessary to extricate von Böhn's divisions at any cost. Into that salient between the Aisne and the Marne the Germans had pushed more and more men, more and more guns and stores, in the unrelenting endeavour to exploit its possibilities to the utmost. It now became necessary to stay its premature collapse with yet more men, and these also had to be thrust across semi-roadless country, their guns and stores adding yet more to the confusion. In no other way could the French and British and American troops be held back, yet every fresh German platoon that was sent in must perforce fight at a disadvantage, and it was this situation that General Foch sat in patience to exploit.

Slow as the progress made in crushing the German salient appeared to be at the time, the process was eating

up German reserves. The Marne salient was the wound which was not healed till every German hope of winning the war had perished. Meanwhile the German Head-quarters Staff, though none knew the truth better, continued to ply the German people with *communiqués* in which French

in order to select better bases from which to deliver it.

Meanwhile the German practice was better than its explanations. By Sunday night (July 21) they had lost 21,000 prisoners and 450 guns, including 45 which they had abandoned on the south side of the Marne; but they



Reinforcements for Foch's Army in the Marne Salient: a Highland regiment on its way between Dormans and Rheims to join General Berthelot's force

or British or American attacks were always bloodily repulsed, and no German retirement was ever undertaken without beneficial results. When the defeat could no longer be concealed from the eyes of even a German optimist, a German semi-official statement concocted the theory that retreat, though it had postponed the delivery of the decisive blow against the Allies in the west, had been necessary merely

had upwards of sixty divisions in the salient, and they fought with determination for every kilometre of their footing. Château Thierry, by the way, they had sacked before leaving it. By Monday evening Dégoutte's advanced troops were over the Château Thierry road at several points between Bézu and the Ourcq, and held Epieds, between Bézu and the Marne bridge-head, across which General Mitry was

now passing more and more men. On the opposite flank, between the Marne and Rheims, the British troops had taken St. Euphraise and Bouilly, with some 400 prisoners, and were fighting for Chamuzy and Bligny on either side of the Avre. The French on their left were working their way through the Bois de Courton and the Bois du Roi farther west.

The Allies' advance was slowing down, but the French Head-quarters Staff was quite satisfied. The German casualties had been very heavy; those of the Allies light. In the sector of Mangin's line, where the Americans had operated, the number of German prisoners (6000) was greater than the casualties suffered. It was Mangin's northern wing which had now the stiffest task, for here the Germans were making the sternest attempt to hold the Soissons pivot till they could withdraw their centre to safety. Meanwhile they were reacting with doubtful success both to the west and east of the main theatre of operations. They threw themselves afresh on General Gouraud east of Rheims, suffering considerable losses and achieving nothing except a line in their *communiqué* to say that French attempts in that neighbourhood had been repulsed. On the west, towards Montdidier and Noyon, a shrewd and unexpected blow by General Debeney wrested from them Mailly, Raineval, and Aubvillers.

The German position in the reduced salient was now confined and dangerous. Its length of base from Soissons to Rheims was no more than 30 miles, and the distance from the midway

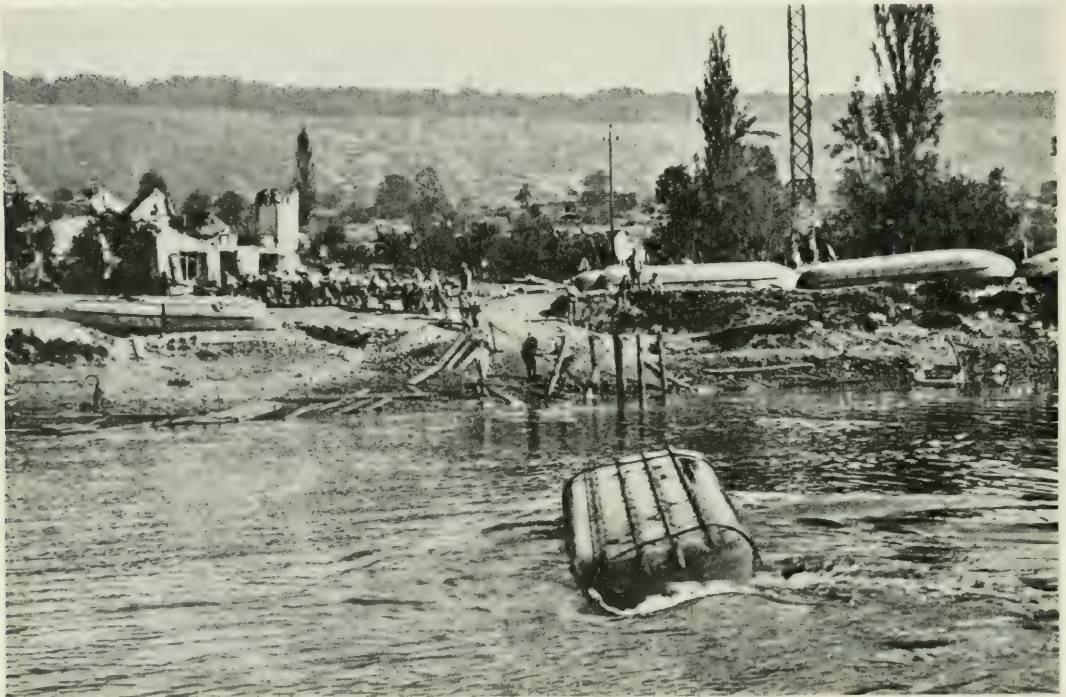
point of this base—Fismes on the Soissons-Rheims road—was only 18 miles distant from the most-advanced French post in front of Château Thierry, and only 15 miles from the advanced-guards of General Mangin's army north of the Ourcq. The nearest point on the Marne was about the same distance away. St. Euphraise, to which the British had forced their way, was only 12 miles to the south-east. From all these points French, American, and British troops were pressing on to the same central spot at Fismes. The French in the sector next to the British had explored as far as Baslieux, which a week before, when submerged in the German advance to the Marne, had been the scene of an example of the self-sacrifice with which Frenchmen fought. Early in the morning a French infantry major, with two companies, was surrounded in the village. He sent off a pigeon describing the situation, and promising to hold out. Seven hours later he sent a message by his last pigeon: "The Boches are on us. We are lost, but we have done good work. Order your artillery to fire on Baslieux"—that is to say, on himself and his fellow-survivors.

That was scarcely the spirit in which the Germans fought, but they conducted their defensive and very difficult retreat with a skill which was to be the more admired because of the difficulties experienced in bringing up supplies over the few roads. At any moment a break-through anywhere along the semicircle of pressure would precipitate disaster. On the 23rd their stiffening resistance held up the con-

verging movement very well, though north of the Ourcq the advance-guards of Mangin seized Plessier-Helleu, on the road junction to Fère-en-Tardenois, and pressed nearer to Oulchy-le-Château. On this day also the other two of the four divisions sent by Haig, in response to the request from

north of the Marne, in the Mont St. Pere-Jaulgonne loop; and the French and British troops, under the single command of General Berthelot, beat off a series of counter-attacks on either side of the Ardre valley.

The day of the 24th was one of what has been described as calm on



French Official Photograph

Where the Germans crossed the Marne in Ludendorff's Last Offensive: French engineers salving the enemy's broken pontoon bridges at Château Thierry after Foch's triumphant counter-stroke

Marshal Foch, the 15th (Major-General Reed) and the 34th (Major-General Nicholson), attacked in the neighbourhood of Berzy and Parcy Tigny, southwest of Soissons, and thenceforward took a prominent part, especially about Buzancy, in the incessant fighting. Dégoutte's army, with less ardent opposition, carried its line 1 mile east of the Château Thierry road. Mitry's army established a firm bridge-head

the front of Mangin, north of the Ourcq. The calm may be interpreted as the ceaseless activity of the Germans in strengthening their front against the intention of the French to get through it if they could. A new German army under von Eben was being pushed up to support von Hutier. South of the Ourcq a French thrust would not be so lethal, and the Germans slowly gave way, fighting

expensive rear-guard actions, but yet withdrawing. South of Oulchy-le-Château the little village of Armenières, less important than its namesake on the borders of Flanders, was taken, and through Nanteuil, Coincy, and Beuvardes on a main road, the troops of Dégoutte pushed their way through the forest of Fère towards the important road junction of Fère-en-Tardenois, which had been now for some time under the fire of the French heavier guns.

Next day Mangin's troops, still compelled to mark time in the north towards Soissons, took advantage of a perceptible German weakening on their southern flank to seize Oulchy-le-Château, which had in fact been already outflanked by Dégoutte's advance. Dégoutte's men were still occupied in digging out pockets of machine-guns in the forest country; but on the Marne itself a Franco-American attack pushed beyond the Jaulgonne loop towards Dormans, through the Forest de Riz; the Germans counter-attacked as a matter of tactics, but their hold on the Marne was clearly loosening itself. Their counter-attacks were more violent on the south-eastern sector of the enclosing semicircle, where the British were operating; and the Allies' progress here was held.

In the gradually diminishing area of the salient the Germans had now more divisions than when they elected to retreat from it, a detestable necessity from their point of view, since the more men the greater the difficulty of handling them; but they had no other course if they were to hold their flanks

from collapse. It was perhaps symptomatic of the way the furnace was consuming their divisions that they were unable to react effectively on other fronts, and that Gouraud, east of Rheims, was able to win back about a mile of ground from them. Meanwhile the German military critic, General von Ardenne, who in the months to come had so many awkward situations to explain, was preparing the German public through the *Berliner Tageblatt* for the abandonment of the Marne. "The German Army Command", he observed, "does not want any river line, but wants to win the battle." The second want was also to remain unsatisfied. The Germans had lost 25,000 prisoners in ten days, and they were never to recover the initiative.

They made a strong attempt to retake Villemontoire from Mangin, but they could not hold this important point, and with the slow but steady encroachment of the French in the south-western arc from Villemontoire to Dormans the masses of his men packed in the country south west of the Ardre and the Vesle Rivers became exposed to a criss-cross fire of French guns. The French were content merely to exploit this situation on the 26th, harassing the enemy by gun-fire and aeroplane. No advance was attempted by the group of four armies—Mangin's, Dégoutte's, De Mitry's, and Berthelot's. On the east of Rheims, General Gouraud, retaking the Main de Massiges, reached there the lines from which he had retired at the beginning of the German movement. The decisive

movement began next day. The fall of Oulchy-le-Château had taken a linch-pin out of the German mechanism by enabling the French to push on a wider front through the forest country towards Fère-en-Tardenois. By Saturday evening German Headquarters had taken the plunge, and, the whole German front between the Ourcq and the Marne having fallen back, their last hold on the Marne was gone. Their retreat had been accelerated by the double penetration of the Allies along the Marne, one advance taking place downstream from Reuil and another upstream from Dormans.

The Marne was lost to Germans definitely before Sunday morning (July 28), and, what was more important, the main-line railway from Paris to Nancy, which ran parallel with the whole Champagne-Argonne fronts, was left unreservedly in French hands. On July 27 the Allied line ran through Bruyères (on the single-line railway running to Fismes on the Vesle), Villeneuve, and Passy Grigny, to Chaumuz. Here the British troops, advancing along the Ardre, swept through the hotly-disputed village of Marfaux, and added one more argument in favour of a German retreat. The Forest of Fère, which was the best defence of Fère-le-Tardenois, was completely conquered, and French cavalry swung on in front of the infantry on the German heels. The advance rolled steadily onward through Sunday. The French evening *communiqué* was able to report that some of their advanced troops had crossed the Ourcq, the whole of which had thus been regained, and had pene-

trated into Fère-le-Tardenois. American troops got to Nesles, east of it. Fifteen miles eastwards the Franco-British troops were approaching Villen-Tardenois, and it was through this narrowing gap that the German troops were seeking to withdraw what they could of the remnants of their southerly Marne divisions.

Since it was now evident that the Germans must fall back to the line of the Vesle, it fell to Mangin's share to renew pressure on their western flank towards Soissons. The task was the harder because it was just this flank that the German High Command directed its strongest efforts to hold together. On the 29th the Scottish troops of the British divisions lent to General Mangin renewed their efforts in the neighbourhood of Buzancy, capturing the park and château, and maintaining themselves there in spite of the attempts to oust them. This threatened to turn one plateau held by the enemy above the valley of the Crise. Farther south British and French divisions, after taking Grand Rozoy and Cugny in their stride, captured another important plateau—the Butte de Chalmont, from which the German guns had been enabled to delay further advance along the Ourcq.

The British had been placed on the left of the French, and on the 28th, when the attack began, they acted as flank-guard while the French crossed the brook in front of Cugny, and advanced on the Butte. On the second day (29th) it was the turn of the British to make the chief attack, with the French acting as flank-guard

and delaying their advance till the British had well started. Our objective was the line of heights beyond Rozoy, where the Germans, in the words of a French officer, were waiting as if they were sitting on a balcony. Besides the machine-gun resistance, the British encountered the fire of a heavy artillery concentration. Nevertheless the attack went forward through Grand Rozoy, which was in flames, and on to the woods beyond it. The French also reached their objectives along the road to La Fère, but paused in front of Beugneux, which was strongly held. In the afternoon, therefore, the British were asked to go on again, and this they did, advancing over perfectly open ground, up the slope to the "balcony". They did what was asked, and, clinging to the heights they won, made the German retirement from the Butte unavoidable. With its capture the tables were turned, and the French and American gunners acquired an ideal gun-platform from which the country north and north-east could be raked, all the valleys opening in those directions. In consequence, the enemy's line along the Ourcq rapidly became intolerable, and both French and American troops were able to press over the open slopes at a rate which had been impossible through the thick woods to the south of them.

In these woods the practice of placing machine-gun platforms in trees had served the Germans admirably, and much bravery and marksmanship had been expended by American backwoodsmen in bringing them down.

The Americans had cause to remember Fère-en-Tardenois, and the valley of the Ourcq beyond it; for Sergy, which they inscribed on the roll of their captures, was only taken after it had been lost and won three times. They followed this up next day by taking the village of Seringes, which also changed hands several times before a last desperate attack won it.

The German front was now deflating. On August 1 Mangin's army, taking Cramoiselle and Cramaille, were again threatening it with collapse. On the reverse side of the diminishing salient, north of the road from Dormans to Rheims, the Germans were hustled out of Romigny; the Meunière wood was carried, and the other pivot of the German gate of retreat, Ville-en-Tardenois, threatened with envelopment. To the share which the two Scottish and English divisions with General Berthelot's army had contributed in this achievement, the French general paid a soldier's compliment in an Order of the Day:

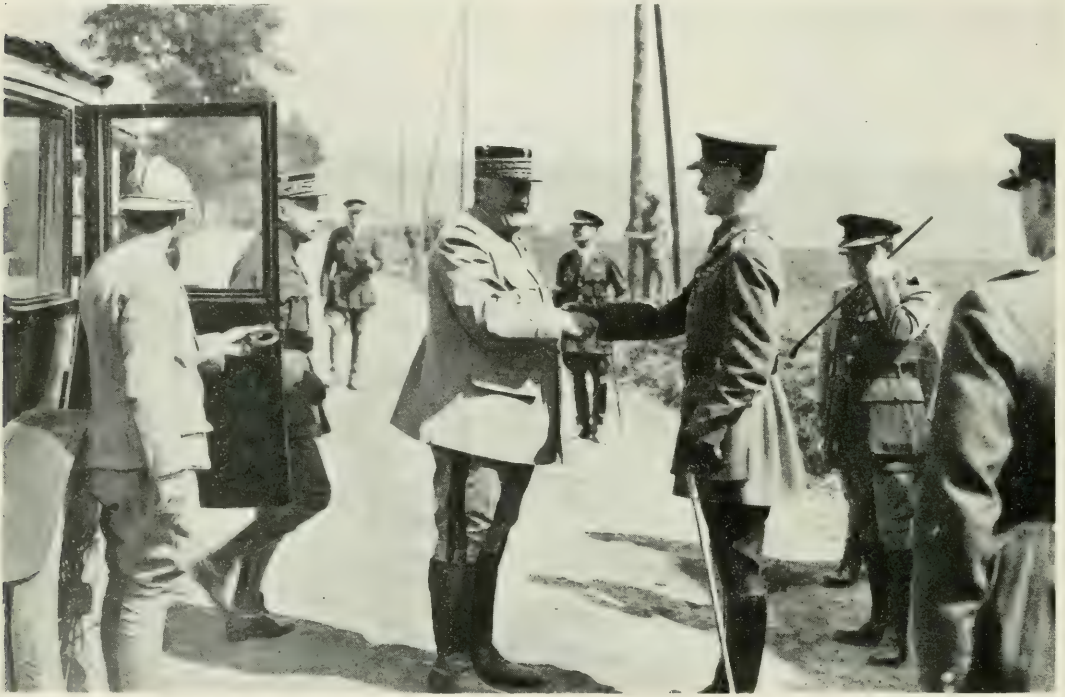
"Your Army Corps", he said in one of its paragraphs, "harassing the enemy, keeping close upon his heels for ten days of bitter fighting, has made its own the valley of the Ardre—Highlanders, Yorkshire lads, Australian and New Zealand cavalry, all of your officers and men of this Army Corps, so brilliantly led, have added a glorious day to your history. Marfaux, Chaumazy, the Montagne de Bligny, are names which can be inscribed in golden letters in the battle honours of your regiments. Your French friends will ever remember your bravery and your unfaltering comradeship in battle."

General Berthelot rounded off his compliments by reviewing the two

divisions; and an onlooker, who saw this strange review in a battle not yet ended, describes with a kind of wondering pride the way in which the British, just back from the fighting-line, had cleaned themselves up, washed and shaved, and turned out

of Hull and Leeds, Bradford, and Halifax, and of the quiet country lanes of Hampshire marched steadily past.

On August 2 came the day of victory, and the stroke for which General Mangin had been gathering himself



British Official Photograph

After Foch's Counter-stroke on the Marne: General Berthelot arriving to review and congratulate the British troops of the 22nd Corps, under General Sir A. Godley, who shared in that victory under his command

their ammunition-carts and transport-wagons, as spick and span as if for a competition in the Naval and Military Tournament at Olympia. The corps band and fifty pipers played them past to the lilt of "Highland Laddie" and other quick-steps and marches. For an hour these hard-fighting men of the Highlands and Lowlands of Scotland, the dales and moors and manufacturing towns

together. On August 1 his left wing, north of Hartennes, made a few slight advances over the Château Thierry road, while his right wing wheeled forward on a 14-mile front extending from Hartennes to Coulanges. In this fighting advance the two British divisions did fine work, one at Tigny, near Hartennes, and the other the Scottish, east of Beugneux. On Friday, August 2, the pace became hotter.

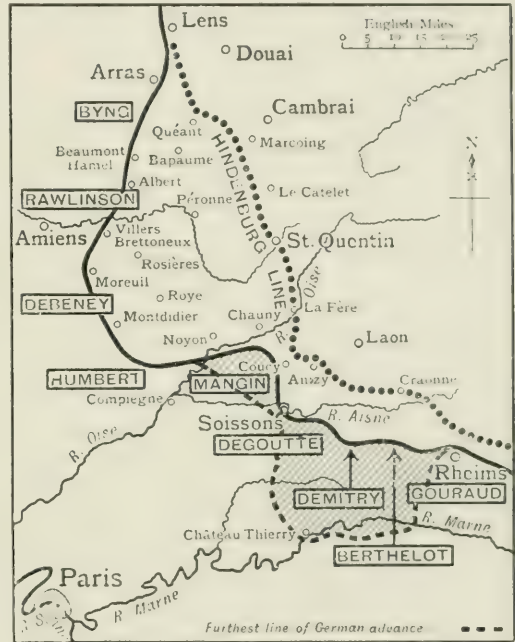
Mangin's long-withheld left wing swept suddenly across the valley of the Crise, after working its way into it from the bare plateau of Chaudun. His right climbed up and out on to the eastern half of the other big plateau between the Ourcq and the Vesle. Farther east Dégoutte and Berthelot picked up the wheeling movement, carrying on the advance partly to a line on a level with Oulchy-le-Château and partly north of it. The German salient had now been flattened till it was little more than a curve drawn parallel to the line of the River Vesle, which was evidently to be a sort of half-way house in a general retreat to the Aisne.

Incidental in the triumphs of August 2 was the previous capture of Hartennes, which was attacked by Franco-British troops from three sides. *La Liberté*, speaking of the British share in this exploit, remarked: "It was the British troops who, on Thursday morning, carried Hill 205 and Beugneux—a clean piece of bayonet work." General Mangin's more stately compliment to the Scottish troops who paved the way to Hartennes by the capture of Buzancy may also be quoted:

"Their last task was important, and its success was one of the essential elements of the plan of action on the left of the battle-front. The difficulties of the ground, and the desperate resistance of the enemy, made its accomplishment exceedingly difficult. They did their work in a manner entirely to their honour."

The fall of Hartennes, which these actions helped to bring about, opened

the gate to a direct attack on Soissons. General Villemont's brigade of Chasseurs-à-pied, breaking through the enemy's outposts, fell on the main German body at Mercin, 2 miles west of the cathedral city. The enemy, well supported by their guns, at first



Map showing the Relative Positions of the British and French Armies after the Germans had been driven across the Marne back to the Vesle

stood their ground well, but by the afternoon were fighting a rear-guard action. They withdrew from Mercin in mid-afternoon, and by six o'clock in the evening the French were again in Soissons. General Mangin announced his arrival there that evening from the head-quarters in which the Germans had been installed a few hours before.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLES OF AMIENS, BAPAUME, AND THE
SCARPE

Military Position after Foch's Counter-stroke—The British Army ready to strike—Foch's Cardinal Principles of War—Sir Douglas Haig's Task—Preliminaries to the Battle of Amiens—The Australians and their New Commander-in-Chief—German Retreat West of the Avre and Ancre Rivers—Attack on 3rd British Corps North of the Somme—Opening of the Battle of Amiens—Sweeping Advance of Australians and Canadians—Desperate Struggle North of the Somme—The French Advance—Following up the Initial Success—Fruits of Victory—Germans straightening their Front—Opening of the Battle of Bapaume—Byng's New Tank Attack—A Fog-bound Battle-field—Clearing the Way for the Main Assault—The Grand Attack—Albert recaptured—The Dovecot of Beauregard—Thiepval reconquered—New Zealanders enter Bapaume—Australians at Péronne—How Mont St. Quentin was carried—Across the old Somme Battle-field—The Battle of the Scarpe—Storming the Drocourt-Quéant Switch Line—The Enemy's Precipitate Retreat.

THE fifth year of the war, which had opened so disastrously for the Germans as a result of the Second Battle of the Marne, found the British army ready and waiting to take its full revenge for the blows it had received in the spring, as soon as the French Generalissimo, created a Marshal of France in reward for his recent victory, should authorize Sir Douglas Haig to strike. Only those who were behind the scenes at the time had been able to appreciate the full significance of Foch's great counter-stroke. It was obvious enough, of course, that the tremendous German offensive had definitely failed, and that the Allies could all breathe freely again; but so many hopes had been shattered in the earlier phases of the war that few people realized that, so far as actual fighting was concerned, the curtain had at length rung up on the closing act of the drama. There still seemed a danger that the enemy, who had proved himself an adept at retreat,

might succeed behind his formidable lines of defences in avoiding the punishment he deserved, and possibly even yet win the war by propaganda and intrigue; or emerge not unsuccessful from it by some other indirect means. Mr. Lloyd George knew the facts, however, when, in his message to the British nation on the fourth anniversary of the declaration of war, he declared: "Hold fast! Our prospects of victory have never been so bright as they are to-day."

The military position was tersely summed up by Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch of the following December 21, describing how the collapse of the enemy's plans, and the striking success of the Allied Counter-Offensive south of the Aisne, had changed the whole situation:

"The German army had made its effort and had failed. The period of its maximum strength had been passed, and the bulk of the reserves accumulated during the winter had been used up. The fresh troops made available during the late spring and early

summer had been incorporated and trained. The British army was ready to take the offensive; while the American army was growing rapidly and had already given convincing proof of the high fighting quality of its soldiers."

The enemy himself, however, though semi-officially admitting the check, little anticipated that Foch's counter-stroke was but the prelude to a general offensive all along the line. Not without some reason, the German Higher Command had plumed itself on having escaped envelopment in the perilous Marne pocket; and, even though it should fail this year to recover the power of the offensive, to which it now declared it was subordinating every other consideration, it fully expected to survive the remaining months of the campaigning season by a resolute defence on the Hindenburg and other lines. There had been no sign of general demoralization among the German troops in the retreat from the Marne; and their 1920 recruits would reinforce their ranks with some half a million men. Hence the Higher Command still clung to the hope of recovering the initiative which Foch had so dramatically snatched from its hands.

But none knew the value of the initiative better than Foch himself, who had waited so patiently to put into practice the cardinal principles of war which he had taught years before at the École de Guerre. "To break the will of the enemy", he had declared, long before 1914, "was the first principle in the study of war tactics—and to break it by an unexpected blow of supreme power." And, having de-

livered this blow, he taught, the first requirement was strictly to maintain a policy of *sûreté* in every succeeding operation, so that no opportunity offered itself to the enemy to recover the initiative. These and similar fundamental principles governed all the decisive movements which followed. Foch safeguarded himself at every turn, unlike Ludendorff, who, writing off the Allies as already broken in will and strength, and adopting the Napoleonic method of marching straight on his objective without bothering about his opponent's strategic plan, had presented the Allied leader with that vulnerable flank between the Marne and the Aisne. Having fully exploited that opening, the new Marshal's plan, instead of thrusting at any one point so recklessly as to make too acute an apex, was gradually to organize almost a dozen separate offensives at different parts of the whole Allied front, each helping, and at the same time protecting, the advance of others, and reproducing as often as possible the advantages of initial surprise. That was Foch's plan from the first, but it was only towards its triumphant conclusion that the world at large, realizing its full magnitude, understood how cleverly every operation had been dovetailed into the Generalissimo's scheme.

Five days after the delivery of Foch's counter-stroke, when its success was well assured, a momentous conference was held, at which the Allied military leaders discussed in detail the methods by which the most could be made of the advantage

already won. Foch asked that the British, French, and American armies should each prepare plans for local offensives to be launched as soon as possible, with certain definite objectives of a limited nature. The objectives on the British front, as Sir Douglas Haig subsequently explained in his dispatch, were the disengagement of

the enemy was still reeling under the Allies' blows above the Marne. The capture of Kemmel Hill, for instance, combined with an operation in the direction of La Bassée, would at once disengage Hazebrouck and improve our position both at Ypres and Calais. The threatening Lys salient would thus be reduced, and the safety of the



British Official Photograph

Within Range of the German Guns: a high-explosive shell bursting in a street in Amiens—see opposite page

Amiens and the freeing of the Paris-Amiens railway by an attack on the Albert-Montdidier line, the rôle of the French and American armies, in the meantime, being to free other strategic railways by operations farther south and east.

In considering his own tasks, the British Commander-in-Chief, not unnaturally, was sorely tempted to seize the golden opportunity of removing the German menace on his left while

Bruay coal-mines practically assured. Correspondence on the subject had already passed between Sir Douglas Haig and the new Marshal of France, and all the pros and cons of the problem had been discussed by the British General Staff. Sir Douglas ultimately decided, however, that precedence should be given to the operation east of Amiens, as being not only the most important, but also the most likely to yield far-reaching results.

Foch's chief aim, for the moment, was at the enemy's main lines of communication—the lines of railways upon which the German armies depended for their very existence; but whether the different Allied operations could be exploited to the full before another winter set in depended entirely upon the measure of success which each

"As a secondary result of the advance of the British armies towards the all-important railway centres about Maubeuge," wrote Sir Douglas Haig, "the group of German armies in Flanders would find their communications threatened from the south, and any operations which it might be possible for the Allies to undertake in that theatre at a later date would be powerfully assisted thereby. It was obviously



British Official Photograph

The Same Street in Amiens—illustrated on the opposite page—after the German Retreat

obtained. It was subsequently arranged that the French and American armies, should press their attacks in a converging direction towards Mézières, while Sir Douglas Haig, advancing towards the line St. Quentin-Cambrai, would strike directly at the vital lateral communications running through Maubeuge to Hirson and Mézières, by which alone the Germans could supply and maintain their forces on the Champagne front.

of vital importance to the enemy to maintain intact his front opposite St. Quentin and Cambrai, and for this purpose he depended on the great fortified zone known as the Hindenburg Line."

Even before Foch's counter-stroke plans had been maturing for the attack east of Amiens, preliminary instructions for that purpose having been given on July 13 to General Rawlinson, commanding the Fourth British Army, whose preparations for

the battle were carried out, in his chief's own words, "with a thoroughness and completeness which left nothing to chance". On the 28th, ten days after the tide had begun to turn, the French First Army, under the command of General Debeney, was transferred from General Humbert's area in the Montdidier sector, and placed by Marshal Foch under Sir Douglas Haig's orders for the same operation. In order further to strengthen the force of his forthcoming blow, the British Commander-in-Chief reinforced General Rawlinson's army with the Canadian Corps, as well as with the two British divisions then held in readiness astride the Somme.

Surprise being the very essence of success, elaborate precautions were taken to hoodwink the enemy, and conceal our real purpose, by elaborate make-belief preparations on other parts of the front. Sir Douglas relates how instructions of a detailed character, calculated to make it appear that a British attack in Flanders was imminent, were issued to the formations concerned.

"Canadian battalions were put into line on the Kemmel front, where they were identified by the enemy. Corps headquarters were prepared, and casualty clearing stations were erected in conspicuous positions in this area. Great activity was maintained also by our wireless stations on the First Army front, and arrangements were made to give the impression that a great concentration of Tanks was taking place in the St. Pol area. Training operations, in which infantry and Tanks co-operated, were carried out in this neighbourhood on days on which the enemy's long-distance reconnaissance and photographic machines were likely to be at work behind our lines. The rumour that the

British were about to undertake a large and important operation on the northern front quickly spread. In the course of our subsequent advances convincing evidence was obtained that these different measures had had the desired effect, and that the enemy was momentarily expecting to be attacked in strength in Flanders."

While the enemy's attention was thus riveted on the Flanders front, preparations were made with all possible secrecy for the real attack to be launched east of Amiens against General von der Marwitz's corps on the Somme, belonging to the army group of the Crown Prince Rupprecht. The left flank of the battle-front, on the high ground between the Somme and Morlancourt, had already been taken over by the 3rd British Corps, under Lieutenant-General Sir R. H. K. Butler, thus relieving the Australians, who, as described in Chapter III, had steadily improved our positions there during the previous months. These Australians were relieved only to strengthen the rest of the Commonwealth Corps, whose rôle it was to form the centre of the new British advance, linking up with the 3rd British Corps on their left.

The Australians were now commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, in place of Sir William Birdwood, who had recently been appointed to succeed General Sir Hubert Gough in command of the Fifth Army. Sir John Monash, who was born in Australia in 1865, thus earned the distinction of being the first Jew to obtain so high a military position in modern warfare. By profession a civil engineer, he was Presi-

dent of the Victorian Institute of Engineers in 1913-5, but he had been associated with the Australian Citizen Force for many years, and had distinguished himself in the Great War from the Gallipoli campaign onwards.

The final details for the new attack



Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash, commanding the Australian Corps
(From a photograph by Elliott & Fry)

having been arranged early in August, and the advance fixed for the morning of the 8th, the front held by the Australian Corps was extended southwards to include the Amiens-Roye road, while the Canadian Corps, brought up by night from Arras to fight alongside the men from the Commonwealth, were moved into position behind this front under cover of darkness. The Tanks—some 400 in all, of the light "Whippet" type—and the cavalry corps, which were

also destined to play a great part in the battle, were only assembled for the purpose at the very last moment and with the utmost secrecy. The tactics were in the main an elaboration of those introduced by Sir Julian Byng in the first battle of Cambrai, and subsequently adopted by Ludendorff.

Apparently the enemy was still in complete ignorance of his increasing danger on the Somme front, but certain movements on his part, in the early days of August, threatened for a time to disturb some of our plans, just as, in the spring of 1917, he had forestalled our advance on the Ancre by his retreat to the Hindenburg line. Nothing, however, in the nature of a general withdrawal developed on the present occasion, only the positions still held by him west of the Avre and the Ancre Rivers being evacuated. This was partly the result of successful minor operations on the Allies' part, and partly due to the complete change in the general situation, and were not allowed to derange the carefully-laid plans of the Allied leaders. Nevertheless, the enemy was obviously uneasy about the situation south of Morlancourt, where any continuation of the systematic advances which the Australians had been making in this zone would place him in an extremely difficult and uncomfortable position. With a view of putting a stop to this nibbling process, and unaware of its impending development on a colossal scale, the Germans brought up one of their best divisions of Würtemberg storm troops at dawn on August 6—two days

before the forthcoming crash—and in a strong local attack recovered a good slice of the ground which the Australians had captured on the night of July 28–29 astride the Bray-Corbay road.

More serious than the loss of territory was the fact that the Germans had secured a number of prisoners, and no one could tell until the battle started how much information had been extracted from them. Subsequent events proved that, whatever the prisoners knew, nothing of consequence had been divulged. The whole offensive on the 8th came as a complete surprise to the enemy, save on the left flank, where heavy fighting had been going on more or less ever since his local attack had been launched two days previously. The British troops had won back most of the lost ground on the 7th, but the stubborn struggle which ensued sorely handicapped the 3rd Corps on the morning of the great advance.

When the battle opened, the front of attack of General Rawlinson's Fourth Army extended for a distance of over 11 miles, from just south of the Amiens-Roye road to Morlancourt exclusive. North of the Somme, as already stated, was the 3rd Corps, with the 58th and 18th Divisions in line, and the 12th Division in support. On the right of these the Australians had the 2nd and 3rd Divisions in line, and the 5th and 4th Divisions in support, their own right now being taken by the Canadian Corps under Lieutenant-General Sir A. W. Currie, with the 3rd, 1st, and

2nd Canadian Divisions in line, and the 4th Canadian Division in close support. The Canadian right linked up in turn with the French First Army, under General Debeney, whose attack was timed to take place nearly an hour later than the opening of the British assault, and was delivered on a front of between four and five miles, extending from its junction with the Canadians to Moreuil inclusive. It was arranged that the right of the French attack was gradually to extend southwards until the southern flank of the Allied battle-front rested on Braches.

The three cavalry divisions, commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir C. T. M'Murrough Kavanagh, formed the British cavalry corps behind the British front, where, after a series of night marches, it was concentrated at zero hour east of Amiens. In addition, a special mobile force of two motor machine-gun brigades, and a Canadian cyclist battalion, commanded by Brigadier-General Brutinel, was in readiness to exploit whatever success was obtained along the lines of the Amiens-Roye road.

Once again the weather favoured the Allies, making amends, as in the case of Foch's counter-stroke on the Marne, for its scurvy behaviour in the past. When the stillness of dawn on August 8 was suddenly shattered at 4.20 a.m. by intense fire from our massed artillery on the whole front of attack, heavy mists were already rising in the valleys, and spreading over the battle-field like an impenetrable veil. The bombardment only lasted three or four minutes, the

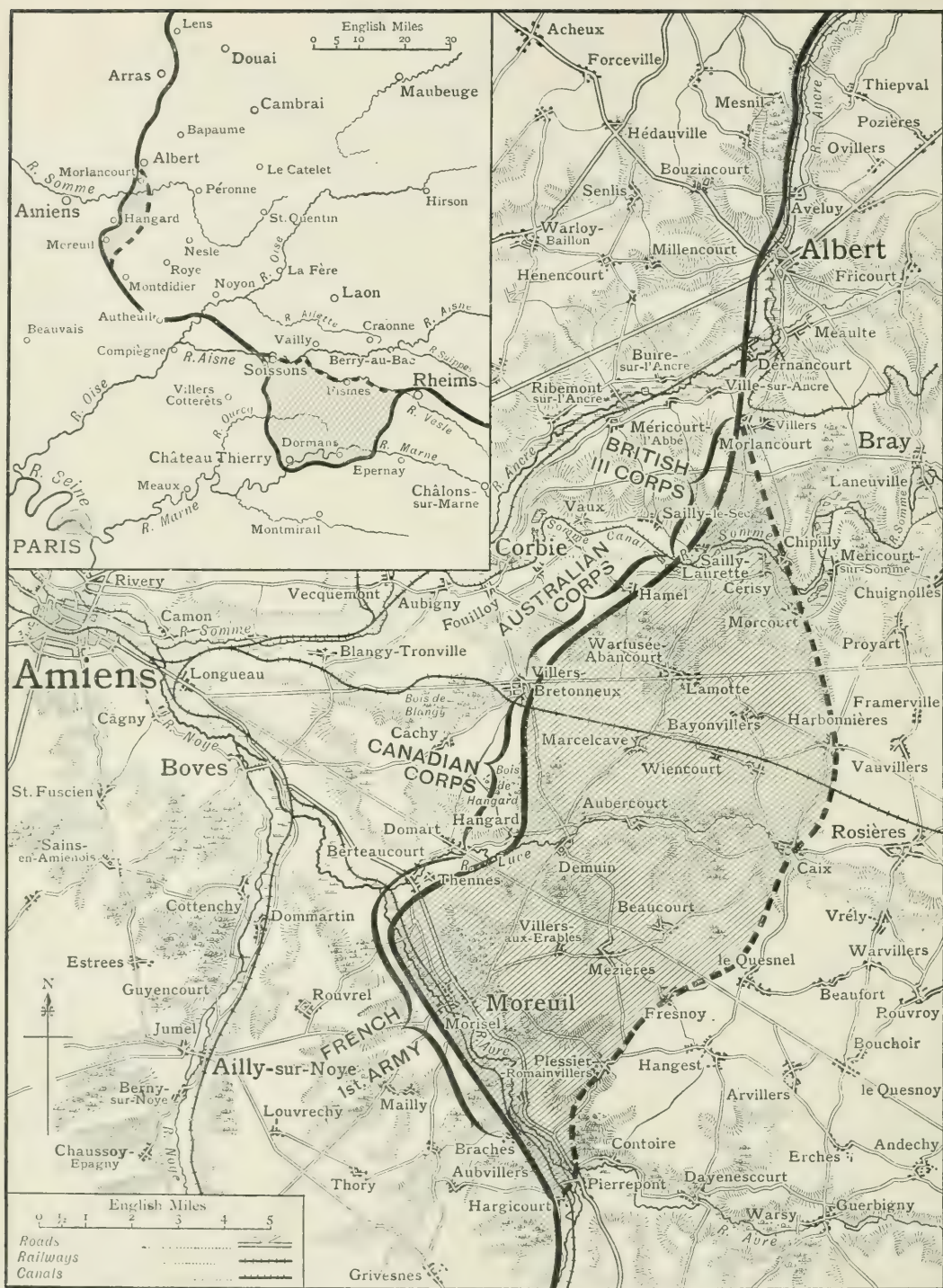
British infantry of the 3rd Corps, and the Australians and Canadians on their right, on the other side of the Somme, advancing to the assault with their supporting Tanks almost immediately under cover of the mist. Our first objectives on the line Demuin-Marcelcave-Cerisy were gained with astonishing rapidity, the enemy up to this point being too dazed to offer much resistance over most of the front. Those who survived the bombardment found their defences absolutely flattened by our annihilating barrage. So crushed were the enemy's batteries that some of them never succeeded in coming into action. The new Whippet Tanks did magnificent service everywhere, earning every word of the tribute paid to the Tank Corps, a few days later, by King George in the message sent to Sir Douglas Haig to mark the close of another visit which His Majesty had just paid to the Western front. He referred, in this tribute, to the "part which this wondrous and steadily developing invention has played in this victorious battle".

The only check was on the British left, where General Butler's 3rd British Corps, as already explained, had been engaged in heavy fighting for the two previous days, and found the enemy on the alert. On this difficult part of the front no deep progress had been expected, the most that could be hoped from it being an advance sufficient to carry the loop in the river at this point north of Morcourt, and thus guard the Australians' flank across the Somme. The result was a swaying struggle

which left the enemy at the close of the day still clinging to the village of Chipilly in the river loop, where every fold in the broken ground was full of death-traps and machine-guns.

On General Butler's right, on the other side of the Somme, the Australians and Canadians, with the Tanks, cavalry, airmen, armoured cars, motor machine-gunners, and other efficient units, carried all before them, and did some amazing things before the day was over. After the first objectives had been secured by their leading troops, other forces swept through in pursuit of the retreating foe. This time the enemy was fairly on the run. Whole trains and transport columns were rounded up. At one place the Head-quarters of the 11th German Corps was charged by British Tanks, and the Head-quarters Staff scattered in headlong flight. Many of the Staff officers were shot or hunted down in the pursuit.

The tables, in short, were being turned on the Somme with a vengeance. By nightfall the enemy was blowing up his dumps in all directions. His transport and limbers were streaming eastwards with our intrepid airmen in hot pursuit. At the close of the day our troops had completed an advance of between six and seven miles, and captured the Amiens outer defence line, including the villages of Caix, Harbonnières, and Morcourt. This was far from being the full limit of our advance, for our cavalry and armoured cars were in action well to the east of this line. Before dawn on



The Freeing of Amiens: Map illustrating the recapture of city's outer defence line on the opening day of the Battle of Amiens, August 8, 1918

(Inset: The battle line from above Arras to beyond Rheims, as well as the main German communication centres.)

the following morning Le Quesnel, which had not been taken on the 8th, had also fallen. Altogether, the opening day's captures included no fewer than 13,000 prisoners, between 300 and 400 guns, and vast quantities of stores and ammunition.

The part played by the Canadian and Australian corps in what, by universal consent, was one of the most brilliant victories in the annals of the British army, received Sir Douglas Haig's highest praise. "The skill and determination of these troops", he wrote, "proved irresistible, and at all points met with rapid and complete success." The cavalry also won special mention for their fine performance throughout. They had advanced fully 23 miles from their points of concentration on the opening day of battle, "and by the dash and vigour of their action, both on this and subsequent days, rendered most valuable and gallant service". The Staff work also had been excellent, and without it, as the British Commander-in-Chief testifies, "neither the rapid concentration of troops unknown to the enemy, nor the success of our initial assault and its subsequent defence, could have been accomplished".

Meantime, great things were also being done by General Debeney's First French Army on General Rawlinson's right. Here the attack had been launched at 5.5 a.m., and took the Germans, as on the British front, completely by surprise. At first the attack was only delivered on the French left, where Debeney's troops kept in touch with Brutinel's cyclist battalion and motor machine-gunners

on the Canadians' right, but afterwards extended, according to plan, in order to include the whole valley of the Avre as far as Braches, about three-quarters of the way from Amiens to Montdidier. Though taken by surprise, certain strongholds were defended by the enemy with great resolution. There was stiff fighting, for instance, before Morisel and Moreuil were captured. Thenceforward, however, the Germans seemed to lose heart, and the French made rapid progress everywhere; so rapid, indeed, that not a few prisoners were taken while peacefully engaged in gathering the harvest miles behind the captured front line. That day the French gained the line Pirrepoint, Plessier, Fresnoy—north-east of which they linked up with Brutinel's force. Besides many guns, they had taken 3350 prisoners.

Sir Douglas Haig, who was responsible for the whole Allied operations, had reason to congratulate himself on his sweeping victory on this red-letter day in the history of the war. It was the greatest success in which the British army had played the lion's part since the Germans crossed the frontier. The Paris-Amiens railway had been freed at one blow—trains were once more running from Amiens to St. Just on the following day—and our troops were fairly launched on the mighty series of battles in which they were destined to advance without a check, from one triumph to another, until the enemy broke in disorderly flight and was finally forced to acknowledge unconditional defeat.

The Amiens attack—to return to

the battle which was but the prelude to these dramatic events—was continued on August 9, before the enemy had time to recover from the effects of the opening blows. For a brief period he put up a stout resistance on the line Beaufort-Vrely-Rosieres-Framerville, but the steady pressure of all arms, working together in a manner born of excellent staff work, gradually told its tale, and before nightfall rapid progress had again been made. It was another great day for the British cavalry—able at last to vindicate the “white arm” on the fields of France—as well as for the Australian and Canadian troops. The 8th Hussars of the 1st Cavalry Division (Major-General R. L. Mullens) took Meharicourt at a gallop, while the 2nd and 3rd Cavalry Divisions (Major-Generals T. T. Pitman and A. E. W. Harman), also passing through our advancing infantry, added considerably to our gains both in ground and prisoners. Gallant work was done at the same time by the Tanks and armoured cars. That night we held Bouchoir, Rouvroy, and Framerville, and were on the western outskirts of Lihons and Proyart.

Progress was also made on the left flank, north of the Somme, where half an acre was harder to win than a whole mile on the other side of the river. Chapilly, with its jagged banks all honeycombed with gun positions and machine-gun posts, was the scene of the fiercest fighting on the whole battle-front. More than one attack had been held up before the British troops of the 3rd Corps fought their way into the village and held it.

This attack, which gained a line east of Chapilly, Morlancourt, and Dernancourt, was delivered late in the afternoon, when the 3rd Corps included a regiment of the 33rd American Division (Major-General G. Bell)—the division which had sent four companies with the Australians in the capture of Hamel on Independence Day, some five weeks previously.

The tale of triumph was repeated day after day until the evening of the 12th, when our infantry had reached the old German Somme defences of 1916, on a general line west of Damery, east of Lihons, and east of Proyart. A number of determined counter-attacks in the neighbourhood of Lihons had been repulsed with heavy loss. North of the Somme we were now on the western outskirts of Bray-sur-Somme.

On our right the French First Army had advanced in the same striking manner. Montdidier was captured on the 10th by a fresh attack south of the town by General Humbert's troops, covering the sector on the right of Debeney's army. Foch had seized the opening offered by the success of Sir Douglas Haig's plan to complete the discomfiture of the foe in this area. General Humbert drove the Germans before him just as Debeney and Rawlinson had done. Already enveloped from the north, Montdidier fell into the hands of our Allies before mid-day, together with many prisoners and much booty. Thus, as will be seen by a glance at the map, deep progress had been made by the French on the whole front from the Oise River to the Roye road at Andechy.

By the 12th, Sir Douglas Haig's advance had reached the general line of the old Roye-Chaulnes defences. Here, however, it was decided to call a halt. "The derelict battle area which now lay before our troops, seared by old trench lines, pitted with shell-holes, and crossed in all directions with tangled belts of wire, the whole covered by the wild vegetation of two years, presented," as Sir Douglas Haig pointed out, "unrivalled opportunities for stubborn machine-gun defence." When the attacks on these positions were carried out on the 13th, it was at once evident that the enemy, now heavily reinforced, was determined to make a desperate stand for them. Too prudent to waste his forces in costly attacks, and having other plans ready for such an emergency, Sir Douglas arranged secretly to break off the battle at this point, and transfer the front of attack from the Fourth Army sector to that of the Third Army, north of the Somme, where the enemy was apparently unprepared for him. The object of the new move was to thrust with the Third Army in the direction of Bapaume, and so turn the line of the old Somme defences from the north.

Having transferred his main attention in this direction, the French First Army now ceased to be under Sir Douglas Haig's command. Although, however, he had broken off the battle south of the Somme, pressure was maintained on that front to encourage the enemy in the belief that he was still fully determined to press forward east of Amiens. The daily reports

from Head-quarters made the most of the operations in the direction of Roye and Chaulnes—the important railway junction through which the German troops on this front were chiefly supplied—while local attacks, which gave us possession of Damery and Fransart, besides progress made at other points, all helped to confirm the same impression.

But the Battle of Amiens was, in reality, over. Twenty German divisions had been heavily defeated by thirteen British infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions, to which should be added a regiment of the 33rd American Division, and the support of some 400 Tanks. Not only had our line been pushed forward to a depth of some 12 miles in a vital sector, thus freeing both the town and the railway of Amiens, but the advance had also, in conjunction with the attacks of the French armies on our right—for General Humbert's army, as already mentioned, had now joined the offensive to the south of General Debeney's—compelled the enemy hurriedly to evacuate a wide extent of territory as far as the Oise in the direction of Noyon. The effect of this victory, following so closely after Marshal Foch's triumph on the Marne, was at once apparent on the *moral* both of the German and the British troops.

"Buoyed up by the hope of immediate and decisive victory, to be followed by an early and favourable peace, constantly assured that the Allied reserves were exhausted, the German soldiery", to quote from Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch, "suddenly found themselves attacked on two fronts.

and thrown back with heavy losses from large and important portions of their earlier gains. The reaction was inevitable, and of a deep and lasting character. On the other hand, our own troops felt that at last their opportunity had come, and that, supported by a superior artillery and numerous Tanks, they could now press forward resolutely to reap the reward of their patient, dauntless, and successful defence in March and April. This they were eager to do, and as they moved forward during the ensuing months, from one success to another, suffering, danger, and losses were alike forgotten in their desire to beat the enemy, and their confidence that they could do so."

The Germans were not only ill prepared for Sir Douglas Haig's new thrust, but were also placed in an awkward position to meet it, occupying a salient the left flank of which was already threatened from the south by the success of Rawlinson's advance. Their last hope of recovering the initiative—this year at all events—had now vanished. Thrown back definitely upon a defensive policy, they began to straighten out the salients left in their line as a result of their own and the Allies' recent operations. This humiliating process had already begun on the Lys, where, since Ludendorff's great offensive, they had only maintained themselves under the constant fire of our guns at terrible cost, both to their infantry in line and their artillery and troops in the back areas. Now that their hope had gone of forcing a way through to the Channel ports there was no object in holding this deadly salient any longer, especially as any moment threatened to bring a British attack

which might force them to yield the ground in irreparable disaster.

Before the beginning of August, therefore, preparations for the evacuation had already begun by the removal of the ammunition and stores accumulated for the German offensive, though immense quantities still remained untouched. The succession of Allied blows to the south hastened this movement, and August 5 found the enemy beginning to effect local withdrawals on the southern flank of his Lys salient. Pushing forward in this direction, our patrols, on the night of August 13-14, succeeded in establishing posts south and east of Vieux Berquin, north of Merville.

Similar developments were taking place at the same time in the German salient on the Ancre, where Sir Douglas Haig was preparing to let loose his Third Army, and thus extend his battle-front to the north of the Fourth Army. The Germans forestalled this blow by evacuating their forward positions in the Hebuterne sector, which now projected dangerously into the British front before Bapaume. Serre, Beaumont-Hamel, Puisieux au Mont, and Bucquoy—all famous names in the history of the earlier battles of the Somme and the Ancre—were thus renounced on August 14, when our patrols, like those in the Lys valley at the same period, pushing forward in touch with the retreating enemy, found these places practically deserted.

These withdrawals gave Sir Julian Byng, commanding the Third Army, so many fewer obstacles to remove in his forthcoming advance. The ground

north of the Ancre was not greatly damaged by shell-fire, and therefore lent itself to the use of Tanks on a large scale. This was one of the reasons which had influenced Sir Douglas Haig in planning his new move, as a successful advance to the south-east by the father of the Tank offensive would turn the line of the Somme south of Peronne, and carry the British army a good step forward towards the great strategic objective of St. Quentin-Cambrai. Moreover, the attack was rendered easier now that we held the commanding plateau south of Arras about Bucquoy and Ablainzeville, which, in the days of the old Somme fighting, lay well behind the enemy's lines. We were now, as the British Commander-in-Chief explained in his dispatch, "either astride or to the east of the intricate systems of trench lines which, in 1916, we had no choice but to attack frontally, and enjoyed advantages of observation which at that date had been impossible."

The battle of Bapaume, which lasted from August 21 to September 1, carried the storm to the Seventeenth German Army under von Below, who faced General Byng from Vimy to below Arras, his left linking up with von der Marwitz's right on the Somme. The whole of the German armies, from the Aisne to Arras, were now under the command of General von Böhn, who, having saved the enemy from envelopment on the Marne, had been given the thankless task of controlling the operations on all the retreating fronts.

That the new blow was not alto-

gether unexpected was proved by the fact, afterwards revealed by prisoners, that warning had been sent along the German lines the night before to "be vigilant"—that a British attack might be expected at dawn. Probably the discovery had been made by the Higher Command too late to allow of reinforcements being sent to the threatened front, as in the case of the German advance on the Chemin-des-Dames—the one occasion on which Foch's Intelligence Service had failed him—or perhaps the Higher Command decided that it must husband its forces for graver emergencies. Whatever the cause, the German line was not stiffened to meet the new assault. Certainly the enemy was unprepared for the disconcerting series of stages in which the new battle was planned. The first stage was merely preliminary, designed to secure a clear jumping-off place for the main attack two days later, with an intermediate stage for getting the troops and guns of the Third Army into their new positions, and bringing forward the left of the Fourth Army between the Somme and the Ancre in readiness for the grand combined assault. The whole of both armies were then to press forward with all their might, and exploit to the full whatever success attended their efforts.

The first stage opened at 4.55 a.m. on August 21, when the 4th and 5th Corps of the Third Army, commanded respectively by Lieutenant-General Sir G. M. Harper and Lieutenant-General Sir J. A. L. Haldane, attacked on a front north of the Ancre from Miraumont to Moyenneville.

Led by numerous Tanks through the chill wilderness of ruined villages and fortified valleys, the divisions then in line carried all the enemy's foremost defences with little difficulty. They were all British troops in this initial stage of the battle, save for the New Zealanders, who performed their part of the business perfectly, taking over 200 prisoners, with less than that number of casualties to themselves. The New Zealanders belonged to the 4th Corps, like the 42nd and 37th Divisions, who also contributed their full share to the success of the opening assault. While they were thus advancing, the 2nd and Guards Divisions of the 6th Corps carried all before them in the same way. Beaucourt-sur-Ancre, and other outposts of the German line were thus recovered in this first phase of the advance.

The enemy's foremost defences having been captured, the 5th Division and 63rd Division (Major-General C. E. Lawrie) of the 4th Corps, and the 3rd Division (Major-General C. J. Deverell) of the 6th Corps passed rapidly through them and continued the advance. At this stage, however, the weather threatened for a time to spoil the day's success. The meteorological experts, who now had a recognized share in the battle plans of the British army, had promised a convenient fog for the morning of the 21st, and, sure enough, it came; but, as it happened, the weather rather overdid it. The fog became so thick—the thickest since the previous winter—that it hid the Tanks as they moved forward. This, together with our own smoke, made it hard for the

advancing troops to follow the line of bursting shells as the barrage fell into space. It was during this stage that the fog, which at first had favoured us, led to some loss of direction. "Men felt their way forward," to quote from one correspondent's account, "guided at some places only by the grating of the Tanks against the wire and rusted material, unable to decide whether some of the trenches that they passed over were empty or tenanted by hidden Germans." Fortunately, the sun dissolved the fog an hour later, and revealed every detail of the battle-field for the rest of the day.

Meantime, unfortunately, the thick blanket of mist had also prevented our aeroplanes from taking part in the battle at the opening of the attack; but as the morning advanced they once more became actively engaged, reporting the positions of our advancing troops to head-quarters, and attacking hostile infantry and transport with bombs and machine-gun fire. In this way ammunition wagons and marching columns were scattered, and in several cases German guns firing on our Tanks were effectually silenced. There was much hard fighting before the day was won, especially about Achiet-le-Petit and Logeast Wood, where the enemy delivered a determined counter-attack. He was beaten back, however, with heavy loss, village and wood alike being captured and the general line of the Arras-Albert railway reached by our troops on practically the whole front. Courcelles was also taken, together with Moyenneville, and the railway crossed

east of both those places. In the meanwhile the 21st Division of the 5th Corps had been busy clearing the north bank of the Ancre about Beaucourt, the net result of the whole operations being that the positions needed by Sir Douglas Haig for launching his principal attack two

attack had "collapsed completely". Perhaps the real meaning of Haig's new move began to dawn on the Higher Command on the following day, when the second stage of the battle was begun in the early hours of the morning by the divisions of the Fourth Army, north of the Somme,



British Official Photograph

The Recapture of Albert in August, 1918: British troops passing the ruins of the cathedral

days later had been successfully gained, and over 2000 prisoners captured, including some Austrian field-artillerymen, who had been brought with their guns to strengthen the enemy's line.

Seeing, however, that only a limited advance had been obtained, the enemy officially proclaimed the day as a German triumph. The lost strips of territory had been ceded, as usual, "according to plan", and the British

who, bringing forward Rawlinson's left in conformity with Byng's new line, helped further to pave the way for the main attack on the morrow. In this advance between the Somme and the Ancre, the 47th, 12th, and 18th Divisions of the 3rd Corps, with the 38th Division and the 3rd Australian Division co-operating on either flank, squared their account with the enemy for the losses which

they had suffered in the costly fighting about Chapilly during the opening of the Amiens Battle.

Londoners, and men of Kent, Surrey, and the eastern counties all shared in this attack, the chief honours of the day falling to the 18th Division, under Major-General R. P. Lee, which, by a well-executed movement from the south-east, forced the passage of the Ancre and reoccupied Albert—lost since the German offensive of the spring. The stricken town presented a dreadful spectacle as our troops from the eastern counties fought their way into the place—for it was not abandoned by the enemy without a struggle, fighting continuing for some time until it was finally cleared by our men. The great church, or cathedral, from which the golden image of the Virgin and Child hung so long in the earlier years of the war, was now little more than a shapeless heap of ruins, with enemy machine-gunners hidden among the debris up to the last moment.

While the Home Country troops and Australians were thus carrying Albert and the high ground traversed by the Bray-sur-Somme-Albert road, the remainder of the Fourth Army assisted the operation by pushing forward south of the Somme. Meanwhile, the enemy, who had been sending his reinforcements farther north to protect his threatened Bapaume front, had counter-attacked furiously at various points between Moyenneville and Miraumont, thinking to forestall an immediate renewal of the advance by Byng's army in this direction north of the Ancre. As

a matter of fact, no advance on Byng's side had been planned for this day, which, as already explained, had been set apart, so far as the Third Army was concerned, for preparations for the combined assault with Rawlinson's troops twenty-four hours later.

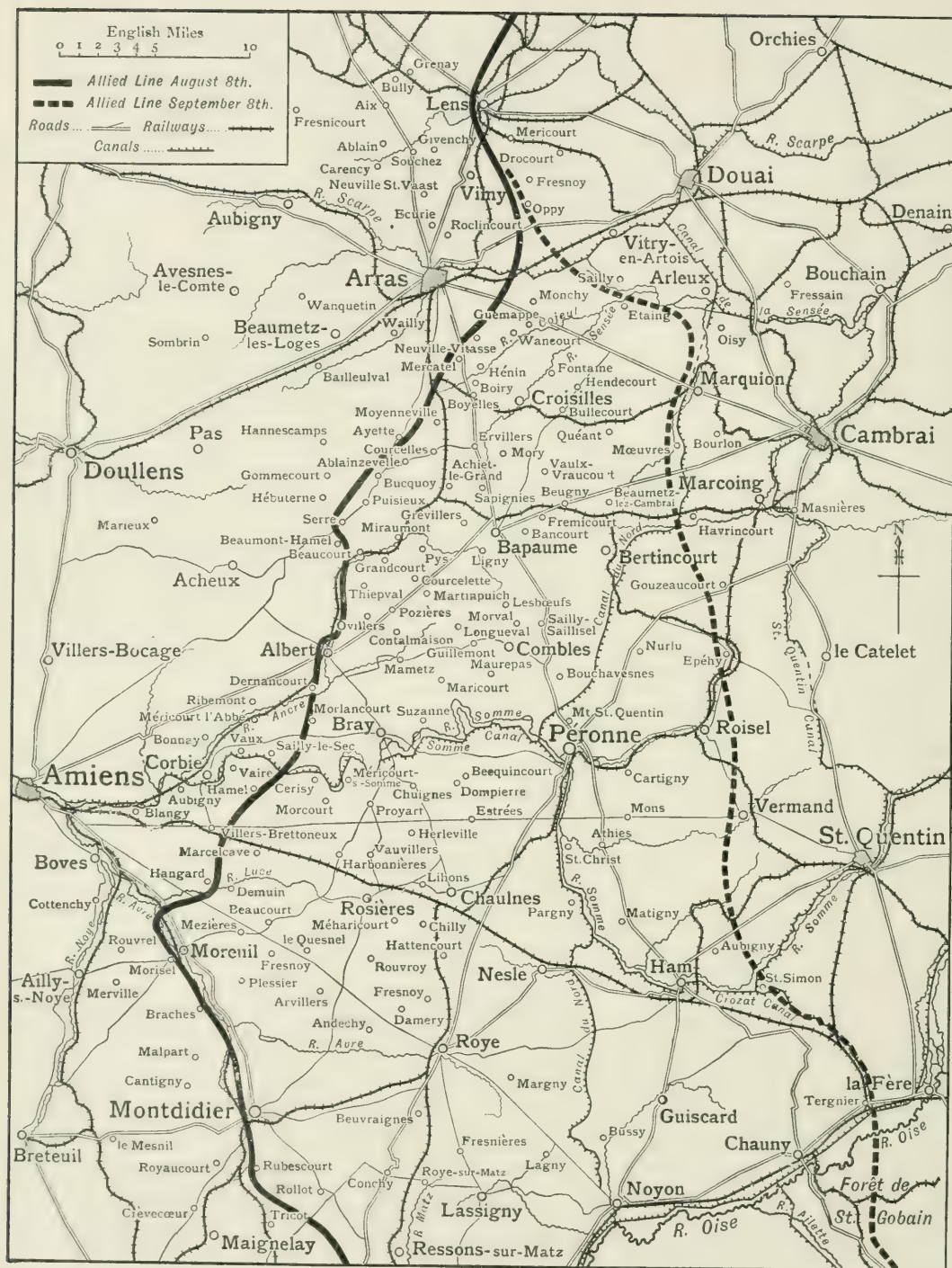
From the weight of the troops thrown into the battle by von Below at this stage it was evident that the German Higher Command, seeing how near we were getting to Bapaume and the Hindenburg switch line, was determined to resist our thrust in that area at all costs. A battle royal raged in the Miraumont sector, where stubborn resistance for every foot of battered trench recalled the evil struggle for the whole of this ground two years before. The fighting was especially fierce and dogged round the Dovecot of Beaurégard—the enemy's murderous machine-gun redoubt on the high ground between Miraumont and Puisieux—so named from the pigeon-house which leapt into fame during the first battle of the Somme. This stronghold had been won by the Manchesters, and lost and won again on the previous day, but captured afresh by the reinforced enemy at dawn on the 22nd. Once more the challenge was accepted by the Manchesters and other British troops alongside. Before eight o'clock, they had turned the Germans out again, and the poor harried Dovecot passed triumphantly and finally into their possession. There was desperate fighting also north-east of Achiet-le-Grand, where the enemy succeeded during the morning in pressing back our forward posts. Our counter-

attack, however, completely re-established the position, some 500 prisoners being taken in the process. Hostile attacks took place east of Courcelles, and at other points, but were repulsed in each case.

The second day of the new offensive, in which, according to the enemy's report, we had suffered another "severe defeat", had yielded a further 2400 prisoners all told, together with a few guns; but what was of far greater moment, it had also cleared the way for the main operation. This opened on the 23rd by a series of strong assaults on practically the whole front of 33 miles from our southern junction with Debeney's First French Army, north of Lihons, to Mercatel, in the north, a few miles south of Arras, in which neighbourhood the Hindenburg line from Quéant and Bullecourt joined the old Arras-Vimy defence line of 1916. It was on the eve of this main attack that Sir Douglas Haig issued his inspiring message to his armies, pointing out the tremendous change which had taken place in the whole military position, and emphasizing the necessity for all ranks to act with the utmost boldness and resolution. "Wherever the enemy was found to be giving way," he declared, "there the pressure was to be increased." In referring to this note in his dispatch, Sir Douglas Haig added that all ranks and all services responded to the appeal during the strenuous fighting of the succeeding weeks with a whole-hearted and untiring devotion for which no words of his could adequately express his admiration and gratitude.

The grand attack of August 23 did not break out at once along the whole battle-front of 33 miles. It began, as it were, in fits and starts, keeping the German Higher Command on tenter-hooks as to where the greatest danger threatened. What seemed to astonish the Germans more than anything was the fact that the British army alone was thus thrusting here and there with such a series of well-planned blows as entirely to upset their calculations. "We thought that the British army was finished," declared one Battalion Commander captured that day; and many other prisoners spoke to the same effect. So sweeping was the advance that it was almost impossible to keep pace with it in the news of the day, and even at this distance of time it is not easy to realize how it all happened—how it was that the forward swing of all these eager troops, responding to their leader's inspiring appeal, gained such impetus as to carry them with scarce a halt through all those places of tragic and glorious memory which took so many months to conquer in 1916.

It was by no means so easy as it sounds. The enemy, fighting blindly and furiously as each fresh, unexpected blow was delivered on the 23rd, held for a time to many of his strong points with all his old obstinacy. Our new Tanks were of great assistance in the attack, particularly in overcoming the enemy's machine-gunners. Sir Douglas Haig did not omit to give these self-sacrificing gunners their due. "Many of them", as he remarks, "fought with great determination,



continuing to fire until their guns were run over by the Tanks." More than one German artillery officer, too, sold his life dearly in single-handed combat with the on-coming Tanks. One crack shot is said to have accounted for a whole squadron of our speedy Whippets before one Tank, luckier than its fellows, crushed him to death.

The attack south of the Somme, which was delivered at 4.45 a.m. by the 1st Australian Division, under Major-General T. W. Glasgow, in co-operation with the 32nd Division—composed of Scotsmen, and men of Wessex and Lancashire—under Major-General T. S. Lambert, effected the capture of Herleville, Chuignolles, and Chuignes, with some 2000 prisoners. About Chuignes, on the Australian front, the fighting was especially severe, and great numbers of the enemy were killed before the place was captured. Farther north the 18th Division and the right brigade of the 38th Division, of the 3rd and 5th Corps, renewed their attacks about Albert while the Australians were advancing south of the Somme, and, after a hard tussle, stormed the high ground east of the town, known as Tara and Usna Hills. Meantime two companies of the Welsh regiment, forming part of the left brigade of the 38th Division, showed magnificent spirit in wading the Ancre in the neighbourhood of Hamel and holding out on the other side all day, with great gallantry, against repeated counter-attacks.

During the morning other divisions of the 5th Corps and the 4th and 6th

Corps (comprising respectively the 17th and 21st Divisions, the 42nd, New Zealand, 5th and 37th Divisions, and the 2nd, 3rd, Guards, 56th and 52nd Divisions) attacked at different hours along the whole front north of Albert. The chief weight of their assault was directed upon the sector Miraumont - Boiry Becquerelle, and met with immediate success. Progress was made on the right by light forces of the 17th and 21st Divisions along the left bank of the Ancre, north of the difficult ground about Thiepval, but no deep advance was attempted during the day in this sector.

North of the Ancre the 6th Corps opened its attack at 4 a.m., at which early hour the 3rd Division took Gomiecourt with 500 prisoners, the attack spreading at the same time along the front of the 4th Corps, holding the left of the extended battle-front. Here the enemy's main line of resistance was carried with a rush. Penetrating deeply beyond it our troops captured Bihucourt, Ervillers, Boyelles and Boiry Becquerelle, together with over 5000 prisoners and a number of guns. The day ended with our troops well astride the Arras-Bapaume road, and rapidly closing down upon Bapaume itself from the north and north-west. The Thiepval ridge, which had been such a thorn in our side in the 1916 battle, now held the German division in peril in a pronounced salient, with the troops themselves rapidly becoming disorganized by the relentless pressure of our attacks, and showing signs of confusion.

Evidence of demoralization increased on the following day, when the attack was resumed on the whole front from the Somme to Neuville-Vitasse. There was still bitter fighting in parts, but it was obvious that the *moral* of the enemy's troops was steadily deteriorating. The garrisons which he left as rear-guards to hold up our advance at vital points surrendered more often than before as soon as they found themselves threatened with isolation. The German Higher Command appeared to be almost at its wit's end, throwing in the reserves piecemeal as they arrived on the battle-front, knowing only the urgent needs of the moment, and uncertain where the next blow would fall. On the 24th, for instance, the stubborn stand which had been expected for the heights of Thiepval, so long unconquerable in the last battle of the Somme, degenerated into a hurried flight when the Third British Army, moving forward in the early hours of the morning, threatened it by an admirably-executed concentric attack from the south-west and north-west, and swarmed over the crest when this movement was complete. The hardest part of this brilliant operation fell to the 38th (Welsh) Division, one brigade of which, attacking on the right, had crossed the Ancre at Albert during the early part of the night, and formed up close to the German lines on a narrow front between the Albert-Pozières road and the marshes of the Ancre. Sir Douglas Haig describes how the left brigade of the same division waded waist-deep in the stream opposite

Hamel under heavy fire, and formed up in the actual process of a German counter-attack along the line held by the two companies of the Welsh regiment, which had crossed on the previous morning and held out so gallantly throughout the day. At the given hour on the morning of the 24th the brigades of the 38th Division advanced in concert with the other divisions of the Fifth Corps on their left, and drove the enemy in headlong flight from the high ground about Ovillers, Mouquet Farm, and Thiepval, down right into Mametz Wood, which the Welsh, as they well remembered, had captured two years before. Continuing their advance, the same division gained, in quick succession, Pozières, Courcellette, and Martinpuich.

The day's achievement, both here and elsewhere along the battle-front, might indeed be summed up in a mere list of such names — a bald catalogue, but all-sufficient. Miramont, which had held out against our attacks for three days, was captured, with many prisoners, by the East Lancashire troops of the 42nd Division under Major-General A. Solly-Flood. Pys fell to the same Division shortly afterwards. The 5th Division, under Major-General J. Ponsonby, having stormed Irles, cleared Loupart Wood in conjunction with Major-General Sir A. H. Russell's New Zealanders, Tanks easing the infantry's task considerably in both places. The New Zealand troops, pressing on towards Bapaume, not only took Grevillers, but reached Avesnes-les-Bapaume—fighting against the inner

defences of Bapaume itself, which was well protected with wire and deep entrenchments all round its suburbs—assisting also in the capture of another neighbouring landmark, Biefvillers, by the 37th Division, under Major-General H. B. Williams.

More to the north a sterner struggle took place for the dominating slopes

enemy closely in both villages. Above Mory the Guards, under Major-General Fielding, who had checked the German onslaught on these very slopes in Ludendorff's spring offensive, stormed their way back with their usual thoroughness now that their own time had come, carrying St. Léger in their stride.



New Zealand Official Photograph

With the New Zealanders in the British Advance: artillerymen in action within a few minutes of reaching their new position

above Bapaume—outposts of the Hindenburg switch line, as well as of Bapaume itself, and consequently held to the last. Von Below collected all the best reinforcements he could beg or borrow to save these positions, and was already gathering his force for a supreme effort to restore the situation before it was too late. All the high ground between Sapignies and Mory was fiercely contested, but our troops pressed the

Above the Guards the 56th Division, under Major-General Sir C. P. A. Hull, was faced with one of the most difficult tasks of all in the advance on Croisilles and the high ground, known as Henin Hill, north of that desperately-defended village. Nevertheless, they made substantial progress, while on their left the 52nd Division, under Major-General J. Hill, carried Henin-sur-Cojeul, and secured a firm foothold in St. Martin-sur-Cojeul.

On the other wing of the British advance, where Rawlinson was keeping pace with Byng's army, Australian troops had attacked shortly after midnight along the north bank of the Somme and captured Bray-sur-Somme. These were the men of the 3rd Australian Division, who, continuing their advance with consummate skill and initiative, carried all the enemy's positions in this neighbourhood. With their captures this day they brought their grand total of prisoners taken by the different divisions of the Commonwealth troops since August 8 to the formidable number of 12,000, a total greatly in excess of all their own casualties during the same period. On their left, London and East County troops of the 47th Division (Major-General Sir G. T. Gorringe) and the 12th and 18th Divisions of the 3rd Corps, made further progress along the high ground east and south-east of Albert, between Bray and La Boisselle. Heavy fighting took place in the neighbourhood of La Boisselle, as well as at certain other points, the day's haul by the advancing troops in this area including 700 prisoners. All told, our captures on August 24 numbered several thousand officers and men, many guns, and great quantities of material of every kind.

The enemy's resistance stiffened as his fresh troops arrived on the scene from other parts of his front, sent in hot haste to keep us from reaching his old Hindenburg switch line. Rear-guards again held on doggedly, and repeated counter-attacks were delivered — especially in the northern

sector of the battle, where the British Guards were battling for the key positions above Mory. The Germans counter-attacked in strength in this sector with fresh troops of the 36th Bavarian Division, and ground was lost and won again in some of the bloodiest fighting of the battle. On one occasion the King's Company of the Grenadier Guards, getting to close quarters, delivered a brilliant charge with the bayonet, and wiped out the Bavarians opposed to them to a man.

Although the enemy clung to his positions in these later stages of the battle with increasing tenacity, our troops forged steadily ahead. On the 27th both Sapignies and Behagnies, above Bapaume on the Arras road, were at length captured by the 2nd Division, together with a number of prisoners, while the 62nd Division drove the enemy from Mory. Late that evening, after much confused fighting, the 37th Division cleared Favreuil within a bare mile or two of Bapaume, where the hours of the Germans were plainly numbered. South of the town the Butte de Warlencourt, which made a black chapter of history in 1916, was again ours, and the New Zealanders were pressing steadily nearer on the other side.

Trônes Wood, another place of dreadful memory, was also fought for again, and fell to the 8th Division within the next twenty-four hours, after an all-day struggle in the course of which the Germans threw in their 2nd Guards Division, fresh from reserve, in a vain attempt to snatch it back. Next day, Hardecourt and the

spur south of it were seized by the 12th Division and 58th Division (Major-General F. W. Ramsay) after stout resistance on the part of the enemy. More to the north, on the other side of Trônes Wood, another bitter conflict was raging at the same time about Longueval and Delville Wood—the old “Devil’s Wood” of the past—where the 38th (Welsh) Division, under Major-General T. A. Cubitt, was fighting its gallant way, foot by foot, in company with the 17th Division, which, under Major-General P. R. Robertson, was attacking towards Flers.

While history was thus repeating itself to the south of Bapaume, the net was steadily tightening around the northern outposts of the town. The capture of Beugnatre by one of the British divisions finally sealed its fate, and on August 29, when these troops, with the New Zealanders on their right, advanced almost to the railway, the Germans saw that it was high time to quit. They evacuated the place early that morning, when the New Zealand troops—always the leading hounds in the pack on the way to Bapaume, as one of their officers expressed it—took possession, driving out the enemy’s rear-guards. It was our second time of entering the town in triumph, and on the first occasion—on March 17, 1917—the Australians were in front. This time the Australians were booked for Péronne.

While the New Zealanders were staking their claims in Bapaume, the 18th Division entered Combles, where the enemy, in his hurried flight, had

abandoned a whole battery of new guns. On the entire front southwards from Bapaume, indeed, the Germans were now in full retreat, yielding, with irreparable losses, both in prisoners and war material of every description, as well as in killed and wounded, the ground gained by them at such heavy cost in their spring offensive. Hard fighting took place about Morval, where new troops were thrown in with the object of delaying our progress, but only swelling their total list of casualties in the process. Péronne was further threatened by our simultaneous advance on the west bank of the Somme, and the battered town itself was soon to fall like over-ripe fruit into the hands of the Australians, who, clearing one lap of the river valley after the other, were determined not to rest until they had this coveted prize fairly in their grasp.

North of Bapaume, London troops had now occupied Croiselles—one of their brigade majors calmly riding into that powerful stronghold on horseback, alone, to make sure that it was deserted—and thus brought within striking distance the old Drocourt-Quéant switch-line of the main Hindenburg system. A gallant thrust by the 56th and 57th Divisions on this eventful day of August 29 here penetrated the enemy’s positions as far as Riencourt-les-Cagnicourt, the scene of some of the fiercest fighting in the earlier battles of the Bullecourt region. For the time being our troops were unable to maintain themselves in Riencourt, but a firm line was established on the western and northern outskirts of Bullecourt and Heudécourt.

On the following night the line of the Fourth and Third Armies north of the Somme ran from Cléry-sur-Somme past the western edge of Marrières Wood to Combles, Lesbœufs, Bancourt, Fremicourt, and Vraucourt, and thence to the western outskirts of

Debeney's army, was evacuated at the last moment. Its fall involved the abandonment of the wide district which had already been devastated and evacuated by Hindenburg in his famous "strategic retreat" during March of the previous year.



French Official Photograph

The Recapture of Roye: French troops among the ruins of the town

Ecoust, Bullecourt, and Heudecourt. Any further progress on our part would seriously endanger the German line south of Péronne, along the east bank of the Somme, to which our advance north of the river had already forced him to retreat. That the enemy was well aware of this was obvious as early as August 26, when the town of Roye, under the persistent pressure of General

With Roye in their hands the Allies were at once able to increase the pace on the whole line of advance between the Oise and the Somme. By the night of the 29th they had reached the left bank of the Somme on the whole front, from the neighbourhood of Nesle, occupied by Debeney on the previous day, northwards to Péronne. Farther south, General Mangin, as

well as General Humbert, was again on the move. Marshal Foch developed to the full the strategic result of all these tactical successes. Mangin established contact with Humbert, who was still advancing on Debeney's left, close to Noyon, which fell to our Allies on August 29, the day on which the New Zealanders entered Bapaume. Noyon was not given up without a bitter struggle—but the story of its capture belongs to our next chapter, in which the operations of the French armies at this period are more particularly dealt with.

For the moment we can steer a clear course through all these bewildering triumphs only by returning with Haig and Rawlinson to the Fourth Army on the Somme, and the brilliant series of operations which completed the capture of Péronne. Signs were not wanting that the Germans meant to make a determined attempt to hold Péronne, at any rate for a period long enough to enable them to complete their retreat "according to plan". The Australians, however, were in no mood for delay. Finding their road blocked by Mont St. Quentin, the powerful defensive feature commanding Péronne and the crossings of the Somme leading to that town, they determined to carry it by storm. This operation, begun on the night of August 30-31, was brilliantly carried out by the 2nd Australian Division, commanded by Major-General C. Rosenthal, another Jewish soldier to win renown in the Australian force, like the new Australian Corps Commander himself, Sir John Monash.

Heavy machine-gun fire, as well as

floods, prevented any crossing of the Somme opposite Mont St. Quentin, but the 5th Australian Brigade solved the difficulty by crossing at Feuillières, 2 miles farther west, by means of hastily-constructed bridges. By 10.15 that night the brigade had carried the hostile trenches east of Clery, and was assembled in them ready to turn the German positions from the north-west. This assault was launched at 5 a.m. on the following morning, and, in spite of stubborn resistance, was completely successful. "Both in the attack itself and in the course of repeated counter-attacks, delivered with great resolution by strong hostile forces throughout the remainder of the day and the greater part of the following night," writes Sir Douglas Haig, "fighting was exceptionally severe, and the taking of the position ranks as a most gallant achievement."

The shower of Victoria Crosses subsequently awarded for these operations testified to the wonderful dash and high courage displayed by the Australians in this grim fight for Mont St. Quentin. We need only take the case of Private Robert Mactier, of the 23rd Battalion, who fell during the clearing-up operations on September 1. Before the advance of his battalion, it was necessary to destroy several enemy strong points close to the Australian line. The bombing patrols sent forward for the purpose had failed to effect this, and the battalion was unable to move.

"Private Mactier, single-handed, and in daylight," to quote from the official record of his Victoria Cross award, "thereupon jumped out of the trench, rushed past the

block, closed with and killed the machine-gun garrison of eight men with his revolver and bombs, and threw the enemy machine-gun over the parapet. Then, rushing forward about twenty yards, he jumped into another strong point held by a garrison of six men, who immediately surrendered. Continuing to the next block through the trench, he disposed of an enemy machine-gun which had been enfilading our flank advancing troops, and was then killed by another machine-gun at close range. It was entirely due to this exceptional valour and determination of Private Mactier that the battalion was able to move on its 'jumping-off' trench and carry out the successful operation of capturing the village of Mont St. Quentin a few hours later."

There were many other instances of similar valour and resourcefulness in dealing with the machine-gun nests and other strong points with which Mont St. Quentin was everywhere defended. Our own losses were not inconsiderable, but the Germans were killed in great numbers, besides losing nearly a thousand officers and men in prisoners. With Mont St. Quentin in our hands Péronne's last bastion had fallen, and on September 1 the town itself was in the well-earned possession of the victorious Australians.

While General Rosenthal's division was thus distinguishing itself, effective support was given on the morning of August 31 by the left of the Fourth Army, comprising the 3rd Australian, and the 58th, 47th, and 18th Divisions, which, attacking towards Bouchavesnes, Rancourt, and Fregicourt, captured all three villages on this and the following day, together with several hundred prisoners. There was hard fighting on both days also on the Third

Army front, but at the close of the 31st we held Sailly-Saillisel, Morval, Beaulencourt, and Rencourt-les-Bapaume, and were established on the ridges east of Bancourt, Fremicourt, Vaulx Vraucourt, and Longatte. A firm wedge was also driven into the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line, by the completion of the capture of Bullecourt and Heudecourt by the troops of General Fergusson's 17th Corps, who, following up their advantage, took Rencourt-le-Cagnicourt during the night of the 31st with 380 prisoners.

These were the closing incidents of the second stage of the British offensive, described by Sir Douglas Haig as the Battle of Bapaume, the results of which are summed up by the British Commander-in-Chief as follows:—

"Having in the first stage freed Amiens by our brilliant success east of that town, in the second stage the troops of the Third and Fourth Armies, comprising twenty-three British divisions, by skilful leading, hard fighting, and relentless and unrelenting pursuit, in ten days had driven thirty-five German divisions from one side of the old Somme battle-field to the other, thereby turning the line of the River Somme. In so doing they had inflicted upon the enemy the heaviest losses in killed and wounded, and had taken from him over 34,000 prisoners and 270 guns. For the remarkable success of the Battle of Bapaume, the greatest credit is due to the excellence of the staff arrangements of all formations, and to the most able conduct of the operations of the Third Army by its commander, General Byng".

With his position going steadily from bad to worse, the enemy was now in much the same position as was the British army in the critical

hours of the Lys Battle: he had his back to the wall. But, whereas the confidence of our own men never wavered even in their darkest hours, the strain on the Germans of this prolonged wearing-out conflict was gradually becoming greater than they could bear, even though, from first to last, they could muster no fewer than ninety-nine separate divisions against the fifty-nine fighting British divisions opposed to them. Signs of rot in their ranks were becoming more and more pronounced under the unremitting pressure of our advance. Having, however, been forced back by the end of August to the line of the Somme River and the high ground about Rocquigny and Beugny, they now prepared to make a firmer stand for a time, their probable plan being thereafter to retire slowly from one intermediary position to another until they could shelter their battered divisions behind the vaunted Hindenburg defences. Exceptional opportunities for a withdrawal of this nature were offered by the line of the Tortille River and the high Nurlu Plateau, and the German Higher Command still hoped to save their artillery as well as much of the material in their forward dumps.

But Haig was too quick for them. He had, in fact, already prepared to counter such a move by swinging the battle-front northwards on August 26, when General Horne and the First British Army were thrown into the fray with the object of turning the German position on the Somme by storming the powerful Drocourt-Quéant line and the labyrinth of

trenches which marked the junction of that line and the main Hindenburg system. This would put the most effective spoke into the enemy's wheel, and throw him into headlong flight on the whole front south of the Hindenburg defences.

The result was the battle of the Scarpe, which lasted from August 26 to September 3. It began on the 26th at 3 a.m., when the troops of General Burstall's 2nd Canadian Division, and General Lipsett's 3rd Canadian Division, holding, with the 51st (Highland) Division, the right of General Horne's First Army, attacked on a front of about $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles, closely supported by the Londoners on the left of the Third Army. General Currie's Canadian Corps had been brought up to the Arras sector for this purpose from the Somme battle-field as secretly as it had previously been transported there from the north; and its sudden appearance on the Scarpe was not the least of the surprises which this blow held in store for the enemy. Not unnaturally, the Germans on the Somme had concluded that the Dominion troops had merely been taken out of the line there for much-needed rest. Although they had richly earned such a spell, they were in rare fighting form when they stormed their way along the south bank of the Scarpe in the small hours of August 26, despite a heavy downfall of rain. Passing rapidly through the enemy's foremost defences, they carried the high ground known as Orange Hill in the first rush, and, as one of them afterwards put it, "took Monchy-le-

Preux and Guemappe before breakfast". Monchy, known of old by bitter experience, was a place of great natural strength and well organized for defence, and its capture, commanding as it did observation of much importance, was the outstanding event of the day's advance—extending on

the 51st Division were fighting once more for the ground over which they had advanced in 1917. They took the first German defensive system south of Gavrelle with a rush and reached the outskirts of Roeux, with the villainous ruins of its chemical works just beyond, and completed



Canadian War Records

The Commander-in-Chief's Praise: Sir Douglas Haig congratulating a Canadian battalion after distinguishing itself in action

the Canadian front for roughly 6000 yards, and including the rounding-up not only of some 2000 prisoners, but also of about 50 guns. The ruins of Wancourt were also carried, and, having completed the capture of all three villages, and repulsed a strong counter attack east of Monchy, the Canadians later in the day made substantial progress beyond them.

In the meantime, on the other side of the Scarpe, the Scottish troops of

their advance during the evening by the gallant capture of Greenland Hill. The 51st had seen as hard fighting this year along many parts of the front as any of the Allied divisions, earning high renown not only in our own army, but also among the French, with whom they had recently shared the glory of the Second Battle of the Marne; and now, reinforced by new drafts of the same sterling quality, they were living gloriously up to their great traditions.

Following up their opening success with unremitting energy, the troops of the First Army completed the capture of Roeux and added Gavrelle, Cherisy, Vis-en-Artois, and the Bois du Sart to their list of conquests, thus penetrating deeply into the old front-line defences held by the enemy before his offensive of March 21. Many of these defences were held by picked troops ordered to hold them at all costs, and the Canadians suffered heavy casualties, especially among their leading officers, from concentrated shell- and machine-gun fire. The advance in the Cherisy area was largely due to the fearless leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Clark-Kennedy, C.M.G., D.S.O., commanding the 27th Battalion of the Quebec Regiment in the centre of the attack in front of Wancourt, where the heaviest losses were suffered.

"Appreciating the vital importance to the brigade front of a lead by the centre, and undismayed by annihilating fire"—the words are those of the official account of the award of the Victoria Cross for the conspicuous bravery and leadership of this officer—"Lieutenant-Colonel Clark-Kennedy, by sheer personality and initiative, inspired his men and led them forward. On several occasions he set an outstanding example by leading parties straight at the machine-gun nests which were holding up the advance and overcame these obstacles. . . .

"By the afternoon, very largely due to the determined leadership of this officer and disregard for his own life, his battalion, despite heavy losses, had made good the maze of trenches west of Cherisy and Cherisy village, had crossed the Sensée River bed, and had occupied Occident Trench in front of the heavy wire of the Fresnes-Rouvroy line; under continuous fire he then

went up and down his line until far into the night, improving the position, giving wonderful encouragement to his men, and sent back very clear reports."

On the following day this gallant officer was severely wounded soon after the resumption of the advance. Refusing aid, he dragged himself to a shell-hole, from which he could observe, and here, despite intense pain and serious loss of blood, he continued to conduct operations for over five hours. By that time he had established a strong line of defence for his exhausted men, and a firm position from which it was possible for the relieving troops to continue the advance. With such leadership it was not surprising that, by the end of the month, the Canadians between the Scarpe and the Sensée Rivers had cleared all this fortified high ground, and, with Scottish troops on either side carrying all before them, had arrived within assaulting distance of their goal—the Drocourt-Quéant switch-line, the capture of which would turn the whole of the enemy's organized positions on a wide front southwards.

This testing feat of arms was entrusted to the Canadian Corps—which had just proved its mettle so splendidly in the operations with the First Army—and the 17th Corps of the Third Army. With the Canadians, who employed their 1st and 4th Divisions on this occasion, went the 4th English Division. General Sir Charles Fergusson's 17th Corps employed the 52nd Division of Lowlanders—the same old 52nd which had won Sir Ian Hamilton's tribute in

Gallipoli, and subsequently borne the brunt of the Palestine campaign—the Naval Brigades of the 63rd Division, and the West Lancshires of the 57th Division, who had cleared the way for the big attack by taking the village of Reincourt and destroying the nests of Germans round Heudecourt in a series of preliminary operations.

The Drocourt-Quéant switch, or Wotan line as the enemy called it, which lay before all the assaulting divisions, had been perfected during the previous eighteen months with every device of modern engineering, until it had become one of the most powerful systems of defensive positions devised since trench warfare began. So strongly was it reinforced with troops, too, that on a front of 8000 yards no fewer than eleven German divisions were identified in the subsequent attack. Desperately anxious to save this line, the enemy had scraped together all his available forces with the object of forestalling, by a crushing attack on his own part, the assault which he knew was bound to come sooner or later. It came sooner than he expected, breaking, indeed, while his troops were assembling for his own blow.

Canadians and Home troops had attacked astride the Arras-Cambrai road at 5 a.m. The Dominion battalions, with the help of numerous Tanks from the 3rd Tank Brigade, and assisted by a mobile force of motor machine-gun units, Canadian cavalry, and armoured cars, drove straight forward on a $4\frac{1}{2}$ -mile front through successive lines of the famous trench system until they had reached

some 2500 yards from their starting-point. They were in Dury village, after a good deal of savage in-and-out fighting among the ruins of the place, and the neighbouring wood of the same name, by 7 a.m., as well as in Cagnicourt on the right. On their left the English battalions advancing with them similarly fought their way forward through the German defences east of Eterpigny. By noon the whole of the Drocourt-Quéant line on that part of our front was in our hands.

On the Canadians' right the Lowlanders, Naval Brigades, and West Lancshires of the 17th Corps had pressed forward in the meantime with equal vigour in the direction of the triangle of trenches and fortifications marking the junction of the main Hindenburg and Drocourt-Quéant lines north-west of the village of Quéant, and had met with success equally complete. In stern fighting among the network of entrenchments both north and south of Quéant the Lowlanders proved themselves as bonnie fighters on the Western Front as in Gallipoli and Palestine, their fine assault materially assisting our advance farther north. When, early in the afternoon, the 52nd and 57th Divisions had cleared the triangle, General Blacklock's 63rd Division of Naval Brigades passed through to exploit the success thus gained, the admirable co-operation of all units being one of the brilliant features of the day.

The Naval Brigades, like General Lipsett's 4th Canadians on the reverse slopes of the Dury Ridge, encountered more formidable resistance during the afternoon and evening, but by night-

fall this had been effectually overcome. The 63rd had now reached the railway east of Quéant, and the West Lancashires, who had again taken up the running, swinging in rare style to the right, were threatening the same village from the north, with the result that before midnight this essential pivot of the Germans' main defensive system had also fallen into our possession.

The Battle of the Scarpe had thus been won beyond dispute, and, following so swiftly on the victories of Amiens and Bapaume, threw the enemy into the precipitate retreat to the south of the Hindenburg line for which Sir Douglas Haig had so shrewdly planned. We had captured, all told, besides the Drocourt-Quéant switch, as many as 16,000 prisoners and some 200 guns.

The month's glorious record since the British armies, on August 8, began their great offensive with the Battle of Amiens, was summed up in unforgettable words by Sir Douglas Haig in the following Special Order of the Day, now issued to all the troops under his command:

"One month has now passed since the British armies, having successfully withstood all attacks of the enemy, once more took the offensive in their turn.

"In that short space of time, by a series of brilliant and skilfully executed actions, our troops have repeatedly defeated the same German armies whose vastly superior numbers compelled our retreat last spring.

"What has happened on the British front has happened also on the front of our Allies. Less than six months after the launching of the great German offensive, which was

to have cut the Allied front in two, the Allied armies are everywhere to-day advancing victoriously side by side over the same battle-fields on which, by the courage and steadfastness of their defence, they broke the enemy's assaults.

"Yet more has been done. Already we have pressed beyond our old battle lines of 1917, and have made a wide breach in the enemy's strongest defences.

"In this glorious accomplishment all ranks of all arms and services of the British armies in France have borne their part in the most worthy and honourable manner.

"The capture of 75,000 prisoners and 750 guns in the course of four weeks' fighting speaks for the magnitude of your effort and the magnificence of your achievement.

"My thanks are due to all ranks of the fighting forces for their indomitable spirit in defence and their boldness in attack, to all commanders and their staff officers under whose able direction such great results have been attained, and also to all those whose unsparing labours behind the actual fighting line have contributed essentially to our common success.

"To have commanded this splendid army, which, at a time of grave crisis, has so nobly done its duty, fills me with pride.

"We have passed through many dark days together. Please God, these never will return. The enemy has now spent his effort, and I rely confidently upon each one of you to turn to full advantage the opportunity which your skill, courage, and resolution have created."

With this eloquent tribute, worthy alike of the Field Marshal who issued it, and the troops who had so richly earned its praise, we may leave the Western Front for a while and note the indirect effects of these sweeping victories in another and more distant theatre of war.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER X

THE ELIMINATION OF BULGARIA

(July–October, 1918)

Strategic Conception of the Attack on Bulgaria—The Position at Salonika—Disposition of the Allied Forces—The Allied Line at the Time of General Franchet d'Esperey's Reorganization—Operations in April, 1918—Bulgarian *Moral*—Preparations for September Attack—The Offensive of September 14—General Voivode Mischitch's Attack on Dobropolje—Kosjak carried—The Wedge driven in—The British-Greek Thrust—The Barriers in Front of General Milne's Forces—The Desperate Assault of the British 66th Infantry Brigade—Welsh Troops and the Grand Couronné—The South Wales Borderers—The Attack East of Lake Doiran—The Cost of September 18—The Second Attempt—General Milne's Resolve to hold on—Pinning the Bulgarians to their Positions—Swift Bulgarian Retirement—The Retirement of the Bulgarian First Army becomes a Flight—General Bulgarian Retreat—Fate of the Bulgarian Second Army—The Pursuit—The Engagement at the Babuna Pass—British Troops enter Bulgaria—Bulgaria sues for an Armistice—Concluding Operations—General Milne's Force directed towards Turkey—Bulgarian Surrender—The Italian Advance in Albania—Re-entry of Serbians into Belgrade.

BY September, 1918, the Supreme Command of all the Allied armies had passed into the hands of General Foch, the key-board of whose strategical operations stretched from the Channel to the Ægean and beyond. In the area of Flanders and France the way in which he ran the gamut of attack, striking now here and now there, is easy to perceive; but in order to comprehend the full value of unity of command, the blows which were struck in the Italian, the Macedonian, and the Palestinian areas must be regarded as part of a concerted plan. When it became clear that no men could be spared from the operations of defence which Foch had forced on the Germans in France, the time arrived for striking at the weakened flanks of Germany as represented by her Allies, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The blow at Bulgaria was struck in September, 1918, and its success put Bulgaria out of the

war and opened up the way to a further flank attack on Austria-Hungary on the one side and on Turkey on the other. Both were left in the air; both succumbed.

The demolition of the Bulgarian resistance, and its character, formed one of the surprises of the war to onlookers. There was an irony in the situation that one of the lethal blows of the war, achieving what soldiers call a decision, should have been struck in a quarter where the maintenance of a striking force had for long been a matter of hesitation, and where the ability of the force to strike had been periodically reduced from time to time, sometimes from causes which could not be avoided, but quite as often because the Allied Powers could not make up their mind whether action here was worth while. The Salonika front had long been the Cinderella of the disposition of military forces. The occupation of Salonika itself had been a disputed

step; and the expenditure of any force greater than was necessary to maintain a hold there had been denounced as a measure which could only dissipate in a side-show forces which were needed on the Western Front; any who advocated an offensive there were described as something even more pernicious than Easterners. On the other hand, France had always pressed on the British High Com-

during which the British and French forces were evidently tied down to a more or less passive defensive of the lines surrounding Salonika itself. Thanks to sea-power, the Serbian army was set on its feet again and took part in that dazzling but incomplete campaign which won back Monastir and proved the vulnerability of the Bulgarian front even when stiffened with German assistance. But

after that, controversy as to who was to supply the wherewithal for a continuation of the campaign again arose. Every belligerent protested that it had its hands full elsewhere; and to each of them—Great Britain, France and Italy—the theory of interior lines, by which is to be understood the argument that Germany and Bulgaria could move reinforcements by rail to threatened points faster



Serbia's Reorganized Army: an anti-aircraft gun ready for action

than any one of these Powers could move attacking divisions by sea, assumed a cogency inducing conviction.

Meanwhile men were frittered away on the Salonika front, which was a continual anxiety because of its malarious regions, and on which there seemed nothing to hope for unless some turn of the war should impart to its forces a strength far beyond that which they possessed. This was not the view taken by the Serbians, and their attitude was not unnatural. They maintained that

mand the necessity of occupying Salonika, and would have liked to see an offensive conducted there.

The question in doubt had always been as to who was to find the men for it, and not the men only, but the appalling amount of transport necessary for a campaign against a strongly-entrenched enemy in a mountainous and almost roadless country, if by roads are understood anything capable of taking guns. After the Serbian armies had been swept out of their country, a long time elapsed

with a moderate amount of assistance, especially with artillery backing, and with their own leaders, they could have broken through. That is a proposition on which it is neither necessary nor possible to frame a judgment here; it need only to be said that every action in which Serbian soldiers fought justified their confidence in their leadership and soldierly ability, and Serbian courage is a thing which shone undimmed through the war. The Serbian soldier shrank from no sacrifice; it was the Serbian legion, or to give it the more correct designation, the Jugo-Slav legion, which, dying almost to the last man, redeemed the story of the mistakes and pusillanimity of the Dobrudja campaign.

For a long time the desires and protestations of the Serbians fell on unwilling ears; a turn for the better came when M. Jonnart, the French diplomatic emissary, having compelled the withdrawal of King Constantine from Greece—and having dismissed M. Zaimis, the Greek Prime Minister, with the immortal sentence: "M. Zaimis, you talk very well but you talk too much; and your words and your acts do not agree"—M. Venizelos was given the opportunity of reconstructing the Greek army on a national basis and of placing some useful divisions at the service of the Allies. The rest of the long preliminaries to the story of the campaign of September, 1918, may best be gleaned from the narrative in General Sir George F. Milne's dispatch dated December 1, 1918.¹

¹ Published as a Supplement to the London Gazette, January 21, 1919.

In September the general disposition of the Allied troops against the Bulgarians and the Austro-Hungarian forces followed a 200-mile line stretching from the Ægean to the Adriatic. On the extreme right Greek troops were watching the passages over the Struma and the defiles through the eastern end of the Belashitza range of hills; and on their left General Milne, with two reduced corps, was holding the Doiran Lake front up to the River Vardar. On the British left two other Greek divisions west of the Vardar were responsible for the front up to the great Dopropolje group of heights. Opposite that formidable position a French corps was concentrated; and the Serbian troops on its western flank were organized in two armies, one under General Voyovitch, the other under Marshal Stephanovitch, and were echeloned astride the Cerna River, covering the approaches to Monastir up to the north of the Presba Lake. West of the Presba Lake the Albanian front was held by two other French divisions which linked up with the Italian forces distributed along a line north of the Vojusa River down to its mouth on the Adriatic. The battle-line along this very long front was not continuous, but was concentrated at strategical points, with *liaison* detachments to maintain lateral communications. The Bulgarian First Army faced the Greeks and the British up to the Vardar; the Bulgarian Second Army held the Serbian and French as far as Lake Presba. The Austrians, under General Pflanzer-Ballin, held the Albanian front along the Semeni River and

plain with strong forward detachments at Berat and Fieri.

That position in Albania had been arrived at as the result of give-and-take warfare in which there had been a brief period of Austro-Hungarian revival. On July 6 French and Italian

Berat from the east. By July 23 all the mountain region overlooking the Devoli valley had been occupied, and Berat had been taken. An accession of enemy reinforcements, mainly from Austro-Hungarian troops, occupied till that time on the Roumanian front,



The Closing Campaign in the Near East: map showing the approximate position of the Allied line from the Adriatic to the Aegean Sea, before the opening of the main offensive on September 14, 1918.

troops, with the assistance of British monitors, which bombarded the enemy positions, pushed northward along the coast from Vallona (Avlona), crossed the Vojsa River, and occupied the heights beyond it. Other French and Italian troops, working inland from the valleys of the Devoli and Tomorica Rivers, threatened the fortress of

enabled General Pflanzer-Ballin, who was given the task of reorganizing the front, to make a vigorous counter-attack. The Italians had no sufficient communications with Berat or with Fieri, and no time to undertake the reconstruction of the defences of those places. The autumn rains, beginning early, threatened to turn the new-won

territory into a morass, and consequently the Italian commander, General Ferrero, withdrew his line from the Semeni River early in August to the Malakastra ridge. Here he was able to overlook the enemy positions on the Semeni plain, which remained a no-man's-land till General Franchet d'Esperey's plans matured. Before the Italian withdrawal the general direction of the Allied offensive had been decided.

Till General Franchet d'Esperey took command, the Allied line and its operations had undergone many vicissitudes. General Sir G. Milne, the British commander, had guarded some hundred miles of line on the easterly section of the front with insufficient striking forces from October, 1917. The line ran north-westwards from the mouth of the Struma River, past Lake Tahinos and its marshes, up the broad valley to where the tributary Butkova joined the river. Thence it turned westwards along the slopes of the Krusha Balkans to Lake Doiran, thence turning south-eastwards at an angle till it touched the Vardar valley. Salonika was 60 miles away; Milne's battalions barred the outlet from the Rupel Pass and Serres on the one hand, and into the Vardar valley on the other. Behind the position good metalled roads had been constructed, and a first and second line of defence between the forward positions, and another, a third line of defence, in front of Salonika.

In 1918 General Guillaumat, who had succeeded General Sarrail in the command of the Allied forces, placed the 1st Greek (Larissa) Division at

General Milne's disposal, and it took over a section of line at Lake Tahinos; but this very welcome relief was counterbalanced by the defection of the Russian troops, withdrawn by Bolshevik orders from Guillaumat's forces, so that the British line had to be extended farther in the Vardar region.

The spring of 1918 was an anxious time, for it seemed likely that the Bulgarians would be induced by the German Great General Staff to undertake an attack in co-ordination with the "Kaiser Battle" in France, which was to secure a German peace. It became necessary, therefore, to undertake operations which would at one and the same time disturb the enemy's plans and reveal his intentions. Accordingly, both on the Struma and Doiran fronts, the local operations which were never quite intermitted, except when the weather made them impracticable, were multiplied. Two such operations demand special notice. In the middle of April strong detachments from the 27th and 28th British Divisions and the Greek division pushed forward to occupy a number of villages in the Struma valley. The advance provoked, as it was intended to do, violent counter-attacks, and severe fighting took place. The casualties inflicted on the enemy were severe, as generally happens in counter-attacks, and those that we suffered were not too great to pay for the identification of the enemy units which took part in them, and for the information obtained respecting the Bulgarian positions. The Allied troops were gradually and safely withdrawn from

the temporarily occupied villages. A day later (April 15-16) a mixed naval and military party left the shore of the lake by Doiran station in electric motor-boats, and actually crossed to Doiran town and landed unheeded and unchallenged in the enemy's lines. The town was searched, the road patrolled, and the party recrossed without a casualty, and, as it happened, without a prisoner, for not a Bulgar was seen—a rather odd little episode! Some light was thrown on it in the following two months, when the numbers of Bulgarian deserters largely increased; and from a number of them it was learnt that the Bulgarian Higher Command had been meditating an attack on the British front, but that certain enemy units were bordering on mutiny, and refused to obey orders.

Additional Greek troops came under British direction in May and June, and early in June General Guillaumat, who had succeeded General Sarraill, gave place to General Franchet d'Esperey, whose assumption of the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Allied armies coincided with the decision at length to strike a blow with their aid at the Bulgarians. It was believed that Bulgarian allegiance to Germany was beginning to shake, although not very long before Ferdinand of Bulgaria is said to have described a decisive German victory as a "mathematical certainty". If he really did make this observation, his subsequent and timely withdrawal beyond the reach of his enraged subjects appears to show that he knew better. About July 1, General

d'Esperey communicated to the Allied chiefs his plans for the offensive timed to take place in September. On the front held by the Serbian army an attempt was to be made to pierce the enemy's centre. The British troops, should this attempt prove successful, were to attack and take the heights to the west and north-east of Lake Doiran. General Milne had three divisions in this sector; they were reinforced by two Greek divisions, a regiment of Greek cavalry, and a group of Greek artillery.

The plan having been framed, preparations to make it effective took the form of withdrawing infantry intended for the attack so as to give them training behind the lines for the part they had to play; the air offensive was intensified, the artillery-fire increased, the raids multiplied. The Bulgarians inferred from these symptoms that an attack on them was meditated, but did not know where it was to be delivered. From the special increase in the artillery-fire near the Vardar River they suspected an attack there, and massed reserves in the Vardar valley to meet it. In order to confirm the Bulgarians in their suspicion, and to keep their reserves away from the sector where the Serbians and the French were to strike, a British attack was made on September 1 on the strongly-fortified salient of Alcak Mahale, on the right bank of the Vardar. The feint attack was an entire success. The 2nd Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment and the 10th Battalion Hampshire Regiment (both 27th Division), which were the spear-head, reached all their objectives,

and the division not merely beat back the counter-attacks, but on the right pushed back the enemy's outposts and paved the way for further operations. Following on this the first Greek corps advanced without hindrance their outposts on the Struma valley, and all the preparations for the combined offensive were ready. It is perhaps hardly necessary to reiterate that these preparations seemed to point to an offensive projected from the British side of the line. As a fact, any such offensive was conditional on success on the part of the Serbo-French offensive in quite another region.

This main offensive began on the morning of September 14, when, from Doiran to Monastir, all the artillery that had been massed for the occasion began to pave the way. The bombardment went on for twenty-four hours, and then, at daybreak of September 15, General Voivode Mischitch sent forward the Serbian and the French troops together to storm the Bulgar trenches on the mountain heights, from Sokol to Vetrenik. The attacking troops stormed and carried the whole of the positions in the mountainous zone of Dopropolje, in which for two and a half years the Bulgarians had rested in security, and the natural difficulties of which they had increased by every device of fortification. Those who visited the Balkan front had often enlarged on the difficulty, amounting almost to impossibility, of piercing it by frontal attack. That impossibility was performed by the Serbians over a front of 7 miles on that Sunday morning in September. The Vetrenik - Dopropolje - Sokol

position was briefly but properly described in the Serbian *communiqué* as the most important part of the Macedonian front. So it proved.

Next day the French Commander-



British Official Photograph

The Serbian Commander, General Mischitch (after being decorated with the British Order of G.C.M.G.) and General Milne, the British Commander in the Balkans

in-Chief hammered in the wedge. The breach at Dopropolje was widened to the west and to the east till by Monday night it had a base of 16 miles, and had been driven in to a depth of $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles. On the west the Serbian divisions beyond the Sokol carried the fortified zone between

there and the Gradeshnitza. They then crossed the more westerly stream, throwing back the Bulgarians over the Razimbey bridge, where the struggling mass was caught by machine-gun fire from aeroplanes. East of Vetrenik, French and Serbian troops carried the mountain groups of Chlem and Golo Bilo, and the Zborsko defences. The most spectacular success was that achieved by a Jugo-Slav division which, having the Bulgars on the run, carried the heights of Kosjak, which constituted the second Bulgarian position, and whose steep slopes had seemed impossible to scale. There was no easy victory for any unit. The fighting for two days was continuous; the Bulgarians fell back fighting, and offering the resistance to be expected from soldiers who never wanted courage. They were outfought by Serbians who had their homes in front of them. The first two days yielded 4000 prisoners, which was not a large number over a front of 16 miles. The paucity of captures testifies to the severity of the fighting, in which the Serbians were the spear, and the French the buckler.

For a day longer the Bulgarians resisted to their uttermost. Their Head-quarters Staff had now realized that the main Allied attack was against the front of the First Bulgarian Army and began hastily to bring up reinforcements to defend their second- and third-line positions. General Franchet d'Esperey replied by widening the front of attack till it extended over 22 miles; and redoubled the vigour of the attacks on the left wing, where the Serbians,

under Stephanovitch, were eager to do more than they were bidden, and were ably seconded by French troops and some Greek detachments. After a severe struggle two fortified villages were captured on the River Cerna, and north of the River Gradeshnitza the heights of Polshista and Beschitsa which, together with Gradeshnitza village, constituted a key position, were wrested from the Bulgarians. To the right of this the success gained by the Jugo-Slav division at Kozjak was exploited and a footing was gained on the Kutsov Kamen beyond it.

By this time guns began to fall in increasing numbers into Allied hands, including more than a score of heavy pieces. The French aviators were completely masters of the situation. Towards the night of the 17th the front of the Bulgarian First Army began to crumble. The Serbians began to go through it; and along the Cerna, and in the mountains, were more than 12 miles from their starting-points of Sunday morning. The 18th saw the Bulgarians still huddled in retreat and the Serbians in pursuit. By the 20th these old adversaries of the Bulgarians had cut a gap in their front which could never again be joined. It was a gap which, having begun to open up westward, now began to develop a fissure to the north-east, which, if it went far enough, would sever the communications of the Second Army with Sofia and would separate it from the Bulgarian First Army.

Before pursuing the progress of the fissure in detail, the operations of the British in front of the Bulgarian First

Army must now be considered; and it will suffice to indicate the general progress of the Franco-Serbian thrust. By the 21st the French and Serbians were, on the one hand, at Kavadar on the Prilep-Ishtip road; and, on the other hand, had reached the Vardar at Demi-Kapu. The force on the Vardar was evidently more than a threat to the *liaison* between the two Bulgarian armies, as will be gathered from the following account of the British operations against the Bulgarian army east of the river. On the 23rd, French cavalry had reached Prilep, and the Serbians were in strength at Ishtip. This movement, which made the left leg of a V, of which the right leg was the thrust to the Vardar, was having the effect of turning the Bulgarian Second Army away from its junction with the First Army, and forcing it to retreat to the westwards instead of to its desired bases in Bulgaria to the north-east.

The position of imminent destruction into which the Bulgarian Second Army had been forced had been aided by the attack which had been begun by General Milne with his Greek supports on the 18th, and the inauguration of which had been made conditional on the preliminary success that had been, in fact, attained on the Franco-Serbian front. The main attack of the British forces, like that on the neighbouring front, was planned to begin on their left or westerly flank, and was to be directed against the heights west of Lake Doiran. Here two British divisions, the 22nd (Major-General J. Duncan) and 26th (Major-General A. W. Gay), were in line

between the lake and the Vardar, and another division (Major-General G. T. Forestier-Walker) west of the river. These were reinforced by the Greek Serres division, one of their best, and all the available British and Greek heavy artillery. A regiment of French infantry had also been sent by General Franchet d'Esperey. The corps commander in charge of the operations was Lieutenant-General Sir H. F. M. Wilson. His force was far from being ample for its task. One of the peculiar disabilities of the Macedonian front was that the best season for action was also the worst for disease, and to the endemic malaria of the region had been added a severe epidemic of influenza which had brought down the divisions to below one-half of the normal establishment.

Simultaneously with the main assault a secondary and surprise attack was to be made on the other side of Lake Doiran on the Bulgarian trenches laid out on the slopes of the Belashitza range of mountains. This attack, if it succeeded, would lay bare the Bulgarian flank on the side of the lake which Lieutenant-General Wilson was attacking; it would, at any rate, prevent the shifting of Bulgarian reinforcements to repel Wilson. But the task set to troops attacking these north-easterly Doiran heights was a difficult one. The troops had to be assembled under the cover of night, and the advance, when made, must be unsupported by any artillery preparation, which would detract from the effect of surprise. Moreover, the attacking movement must be made across an open plain. It was trying

the Cretan division, to whom this task had been assigned, rather too highly to ask them to do it unsupported, so they were stiffened with troops of the British 28th Division (Major-General Croker) and the sector was placed under the command of Lieutenant-General C. J. Briggs.

No one, it will be seen, had an easy prospect; but the least alluring was that which faced Wilson's British-Greek forces. In front of them was a medley of rocky hill-sides and rounded hills, cut by deep ravines which hindered progress and afforded unlimited opportunity for enfilading fire from the Bulgarians who were ensconced in them, and who had improved these advantages by every kind of trench. If and when an advance was made the ground won was hard to hold, because trenches could not be quickly dug on these barren rocks. The features dominating the whole position were the "P" ridge and the Grand Couronné. The "P" ridge, 2000 feet high, slopes southwards to the British lines, overlooking them and the whole country as far as Salonika, 40 miles away. To the west of it the hills step in a succession of waves from Petit Couronné, steeply rising from the lake to Grand Couronné, which is almost of the same height as the "P" ridge. The Bulgars had drawn three successive lines of trenches all along this front; they had fortified and concreted them like Germans; and, since the position was the key to the Vardar, they held them with their best fighters.

The bombardment had been in being ever since the signal had been

given for the first attack launched by the French Commander-in-Chief on the Doproplje front; shortly before dawn on September 18 it rose to drum-fire, and to that sound the first attacking troops went forward. It may be said at once that no overthrow of the Bulgarian positions, and certainly no piercing of their front, took place. The task was too difficult. But at a great cost the secondary object of the attempt was achieved. The enemy was sufficiently hard hit to be unable to remove any of his reserves to the sector where the Second Bulgarian Army stood so greatly in need of men, and where the Franco-Serbian troops were destroying the integrity of the Bulgarian army as a whole. Moreover, if the Bulgarians inflicted heavy losses, they suffered them. The first movements of the Allied troops promised a greater victory than could be consummated. Two regiments of the Greek divisions on the right of the attack overran the Bulgarian lines in front of Doiran Hill, which rises from what were the ruins of the town, and took a number of prisoners. On the left the British 66th Infantry Brigade, leading the attack on the "P" ridge, went through two Bulgarian lines of trenches and reached the third. But the effort had been costly, and when the remnants of the brigade reached the third line they came under a machine-gun fire that made it impossible to advance and deadly to stay where they were. Two-thirds of their men were lost before they were compelled to fall back. The 12th Battalion Cheshire Regiment, and the 9th Battalion South

Lancashire Regiment were the heaviest sufferers; and Lieutenant-Colonel A. R. Clegg Hill and Lieutenant-Colonel B. F. Bishop both fell while leading their battalions. The losses of the 8th Battalion King's Shropshire Light Infantry, which had supported an attack marked by unwavering self-sacrifice and courage, were hardly less heavy than those of the Cheshire and Lancashire men. This repulse—it was no less—reacted on the rest of the attack. Greek and Welsh troops in the centre had gone strongly forward over the network of trenches in the saddle and hills between "P" ridge and Grand Couronné, and had made a mile of ground, in spite of the emplaced machine-guns. They got as far as the lower slopes of the Grand Couronné, but their flank was in the air as soon as the 66th Brigade began to fall back from "P" ridge: so they, too, had to retire conformably. The last to leave were the survivors of the 7th Battalion South Wales Borderers—19 unwounded men and one wounded officer.

Six months later, on March 2, 1919, by order of General Franchet d'Esperey, the Croix de Guerre was presented to this great battalion—"a battalion", so the French Army Orders ran, "animated by a remarkable spirit and a lofty sense of duty". The Order continues: "On September 18, 1918, under the energetic leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Burgess, it attacked the enemy's positions, climbing a steep slope under a hail of shells and the fire of trench mortars and machine-guns. In spite of heavy losses it pressed on with no thought

but to reach the enemy, and thereby gave proof of its tenacity and spirit, and formed an example of self-sacrifice worthy of the highest praise."

The attack east of Lake Doiran fared little better. The Cretan division, with the British troops of the 28th Division in support, having assembled during the night behind the dismantled embankment of the railway, pushed forward through the bottle neck of the plain to the Bulgarian positions north of the lake on the Blaga Planina. They carried the outpost line and went through it to the main line, but here they stuck. They got a foothold, but it was too precarious a one, and they were ordered back to the railway. One thing, however, had been gained by the Greco-British attack. It had pinned the Bulgarians to their positions; and General Milne, despite his losses, had enough confidence in his troops to be able to tell them to carry on. They were ordered to keep all the ground won and to renew the attack next morning west of the lake. He brought up all the men he could for the job, and General Franchet d'Esperey sent him a regiment of the 14th Greek Division, as a reserve.

So as night fell on this dark day the bombardment was renewed, and next morning at five o'clock the bloody business began again. Scottish and Greek troops moved forward against the trenches of the Grand Couronné. They got through the machine-gun fire to the points they had been told to reach, but they got there in patches. On their left the troops had come under a heavy bar-

rage while assembling, and could not get started at all, or hardly at all. The 65th Infantry Division, weakened by influenza (the men had been moved up from an influenza camp in the night!), tried to take "P" ridge by themselves, but the machine-guns were too much for them. Consequently, once again the troops that had gained positions in the centre found themselves unsupported on either flank. They were compelled to fall back. The stubborn retreat, covered by the 12th Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, the 8th Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers, and the 11th Battalion Scottish Rifles, was one of the greatest, but most harrowing, episodes on this front. They lost all their commanding officers, killed or wounded. Yet it was not all loss. Petit Couronné and the neighbouring hill with 1200 prisoners had been taken: the Bulgarians also had suffered heavy losses, and their reserves had all been withdrawn. General Milne was still resolved not to let go.

He was right. His costly attack had done what it was intended to do. As was made clear in the earlier part of this chapter, the Franco-Serbian push on the Second Bulgarian Army's front had, when it reached the Vardar, severed the *liaison* with the First Bulgarian Army, and was turning that army's flank. General Milne's attack had held it there till the danger-point to its communications had been reached. By midday of September 21 the Bulgarian command realized its plight and recognized that their defence of "P" ridge and the Grand Couronné,

though it had kept the British back, had been a success which might prove more damaging to themselves than a retirement would have been. It remained to them to retire before it was too late, and that was the course they adopted. They burnt their supply depots at Hudova, Cestova, and other places behind their lines, and the blowing up of ammunition depots quickly conveyed to British Head-quarters the knowledge that the Bulgarian Doiran front was being hastily evacuated. The air patrols confirmed the news, for they found the Kosturino Pass, on the Strumica road, the only first-class line of retreat now open to the Bulgarians, clogged by masses of men and transport going north. The opportunity was one of which the dominant air service took every advantage. Flying low, the aviators shot down men and horses and oxen, and created a confusion that bordered on panic. By evening light the forward patrols found the Bulgarian front-line trenches empty. Before the dawn of next day the whole British-Greek army was on the move over the ground which forty-eight hours before had seemed to be unpurchaseable by their blood and sacrifice. By the night of the 22nd the Bulgarian First Army no longer existed as a threat, or even as an offensive-defensive force. It was a retreating army of more than doubtful *moral*, and of an integrity that was preserved only by the conduct of its best machine-gun units, who acted as rear-guards. The foremost British troops reached the line Kara-Ogular Hamzali-Bogdanci; west of

the Vardar the 27th Division advanced with the Archipelago division of the Franco-Greek corps on their immediate left.

In the next few days the pursuit was pressed by all the Allied armies from Doiran to Monastir. Thus in the short space of a week, General

treut to Uskub intercepted, was turned more and more westwards till it had to fall back through Krushevo into Albania.

This second retreat became a rout. Much of the credit for converting it into one belonged to the Serbians, whose energy in pressing the pursuit



British Official Photograph

The Bulgarian Rout: Greek soldiers escorting Bulgar prisoners along a captured trench

D'Esperey's strategic plan had driven a wedge 40 miles deep between the Cerna and Vardar Rivers, the effect of which was to separate the two Bulgarian armies one from the other, and cause them to follow divergent lines of retreat, the First Bulgarian Army, in front of General Milne, retreating into Bulgaria through Strumnitza and the Belashitza defiles, while the Second Army, finding its re-

was extraordinary, even in a campaign and among soldiery where the one thought was to destroy a hated foe. By the 24th their infantry, pushing along the left bank of the Vardar, and driving all opposition headlong before them, had reached Krivo Lakavitsa; their cavalry had been thrown into Ishtip. They had captured Gradsko, the junction of the railways, one of which runs from Salonika

to Uskub along the Vardar valley, and the other runs down to Monastir. Their *communiqués* of this date do not trouble to mention the number of prisoners, but they dwell on the heavy guns, the wagons, and the supplies in enormous quantities falling into their hands. These, after all, were the most convincing symptom that the Bulgarian retirement was a disaster. But from a strategic standpoint disaster began to show its unmistakable head first on the Prilep-Veles road on the 24th, when the enemy resistance broke down badly near Izvor at the northern end of the Babuna pass.

The Serbians, by some miracle, had got up their own machine-guns, with which they scattered a Bulgarian battery and at the same time captured a complete German machine-gun company. The Bulgarians no longer had either stomach or discipline for fighting, and at this stage the Germans with them were firing on them as they fled. Some idea of the confusion may be gathered from the fact that at Troyabi, where the Germans fired their depots, the flames spread to one of their hospitals and a hundred wounded perished. On the 26th the Serbians captured the whole of the Babuna Pass, where the last hopes of Serbia in 1916 of holding up the German-Bulgarian advance till Allied help was at hand had faded. The tables were turned now. Veles and Ishtip were captured on the same day, and the 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns that had been captured by the Allied forces were only a symbol of the complete severance of the

Bulgarian forces into two groups. The Second Bulgarian Army was scattered, and that part of it known as the Eleventh German Army, consisting of Bulgarians commanded by a German general and staff, and stiffened with German battalions, was being driven towards Kalkandalen, west of Uskub.

The Serbians meanwhile pressed on to Uskub to prevent it from ever getting back again. A less important but not less significant event had taken place the day before (25th), when the Derbyshire Yeomanry, the leading troops of the 16th Corps (Lieutenant-General C. J. Briggs), who had been brought round from the right of the British forces to the left, entered Bulgaria.

These were followed quickly by a Greek Division (the 14th, which had replaced the Serres division) and the 26th British Division. Simultaneously the 22nd Division, west of Lake Doiran, and the hard-fighting Cretan division on the east of the lake, began to climb the steep slopes of the Belashitza range, which confronted them. In the centre the 28th Division, which had come across from the extreme right with all the speed that forced marches and the belief in victory could compass, reached the heights of Dzuma Obasi. The 16th Corps had now (September 26) its feet on the Strumnitza-Petrie road, thus turning the flank of the Belashitza range.

During the following night, French, British, and Greek troops stormed the summits of the Belashitza. The Bulgarian resistance could not have been determined, for in the conditions of

warfare that had for so long prevailed, the steep ascent to summits 4000 feet above the lake, the absence of paths, and the consequent difficulties of keeping touch, would have made an attack here one which no commander could have risked. But it was a job that involved risks, and was not finished without losses. The 8th Battalion, South Wales Borderers, under Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Dobbs, specially distinguished themselves. The enemy were now leaving everything behind them as they set their faces towards their homes; guns, ammunition, motor-cars, stores, hospitals, and many of our own wounded prisoners were left behind. If the Bulgarian Head-quarters ever hoped to retrieve the position, the Bulgarian rank and file did not, nor did the Bulgarian politicians.

At eight o'clock on the morning of September 26 a Bulgarian *parlementaire*, under a white flag, rode towards the British lines. They bore a proposal for an armistice, and were immediately conducted to General Milne's head-quarters, and thence to Allied Head-quarters at Salonika. Two days later the Bulgarian Plenipotentiaries, M. Radev, M. Lyapchev, and General Lukov, commander of the expiring Second Bulgarian Army, also trod the way to Salonika.

Meanwhile the pursuit was continued. On the 29th the French entered Uskub, the Italians west of Monastir were on the move from Lake Presba and Lake Ochrida, and the Serbians, tireless in pursuit, were still streaming to the north towards their ancient capital. The British were doing their share to complete in the

First Bulgarian Army the same process of decay that had overtaken the Second. The Strumnitza valley runs eastwards towards the Upper Struma valley, which it joins near Petrie, 15 miles north of Rupel and Demir-Hissar. The defile of the Upper Struma through the Kresna and the Rupel Passes formed the main line of communication and retreat for the Bulgar forces strung out along the Lower Struma. The 16th Corps was swung eastwards to strike at this, a flank-guard taking the low road by way of Berovo to Pechovo on their left, and the Cretan division, with the 28th Infantry Brigade, taking the high road along the crest of the Belashitza, and thence down the Bulkova valley against Rupel and Demir-Hissar. They were racing to inflict as much damage as they could on a retreating enemy, which, as the air pilots found, were already choking the Kresna Pass in their haste. Some of the Bulgarians had, nevertheless, plenty of fight left in them. They put up a strong resistance in the Strumnitza valley north of Yemkoj, and on the northward descending slopes of the mountain range. Two Greek divisions, with British cavalry and artillery, were still fighting them back, when, at two o'clock on the morning of the last day of September, with only 15 miles to go before the Rupel Pass could be reached, the news came that a military convention had been signed, and that fighting would cease at midday.

One can discern in General Milne's dispatch a distinct note of disappointment. Orders were that the British army should move by Petrie and

Radomir through Bulgaria to the Danube to co-operate near Vidin with French and Serbian troops in operation against Austro-Hungary, and this advance had already begun when, on October 10, General Milne received instructions to assume command of

Maritza, ready to seize Adrianople, and the 1st Greek Corps was ready to advance from Kavala and Drama on Constantinople. This great transfer of 250 miles could only have been accomplished with the aid of the navy, so that the last words of General Milne's dispatch, in so far as it relates to operations, are a tribute to British sea-power.

On September 29 the French entered Uskub; the fate of the Bulgarian Second Army was thus sealed strategically. It had been sealed politically when the Bulgarian envoys reached Salonika on the 28th, for they came to ask for an armistice which could have no other outcome than unconditional surrender as its leading clause. Bulgaria had long been dissatisfied with the attitude of Germany, which had dictated her military policy, besides practically taking over the High Command; and had, in addition, attempted to administer the country's food supplies. The refusal of Germany to furnish further military assistance—a refusal which, early in the year, had been reasonably dictated by Ludendorff's desire to keep all his forces for the great blow in the West, and which, after July, had been a matter of necessity, since Ludendorff was in no position to spare troops for any other theatre of war—had aggravated Bulgarian dissatisfaction; and the last straw had been Germany's refusal to give Bulgaria the whole of the Dobrudja when terms were made with Rumania. The Radovslavov Cabinet had fallen in June; that of Malinov, which



Before the Collapse: the Tsar Ferdinand of Bulgaria and the Emperor Karl of Austria

the Allied troops acting against, not Bulgaria, or even Austria-Hungary, but—Turkey. Bulgaria having fallen out, Turkey was in the air, and preparations were hastened to prove to her the extreme disabilities of that position. She realized it by October 30, a date at which General Milne, in spite of all the difficulties of transport, had placed two British and one French division on the

succeeded it, had been for some time seeking, by underground means, an understanding with Great Britain and France.

At the end of September intrigue was evidently useless; open diplomacy was the only thing to save Bulgaria, and on September 30 Malinov's Government agreed to a surrender which gave the Allies complete control of Bulgarian railways and communications, demobilized the Bulgarian armies, and surrendered their arms. A stipulation which reflected the uneasy conscience of Bulgaria, was that French and British forces, not Serbian, should be the troops of occupation. The terms of their convention were agreed to by General Torodov, who had been acting as Commander-in-Chief in the absence of General Jekov (who was ill), and General Jekov repudiated it. But it was approved by the Bulgarian Sobranje on October 4, and immediately afterwards Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who, earlier in the year, had declared that the victory of January was a mathematical certainty, abdicated the throne and left Bulgaria in order to avoid the mathematical probability that he would be assassinated if he stayed. His son Boris occupied an uneasy throne for six weeks and then Bulgaria became a Republic.

Meanwhile, the unassisted forces of Austria had made a futile attempt to hold back the Serbians and the

Italians. But on October 1 General Ferrero advanced again on Berat, occupied it, and went on through the Austrian resistance like brown paper. A daring cutting-out expedition was made by Italian and British warships on the port of Durazzo, and the port was occupied on October 15 by Italian troops. With this as a new base the Allies had a comparatively simple task in marching through Albania—if the miserable roads are left out of the problem. The Serbians had seized simultaneously Dibra on the frontier; the French took Mitrovitza and Pristina; the Montenegrins in the hills rose again.

The Germans, hardly able to believe that the country in which they had been so long conquerors was crumbling under their feet, tried to hold Nish, which is the ancient Serbian capital and the modern junction in Serbia of the Berlin-Bagdad railway; but the Serbians were too quick for them. They were in the town by October 18 and the Germans out of it by night. Still pressing on with all the fury of "a lifetime's injuries burning unavenged", the Serbians reached the Danube¹ at Semendria on October 29 and re-entered Belgrade on November 1. The last Germans recrossed the Danube on November 3.

E. S. G.

¹ The French reached Vidin, near the Bulgarian Danube frontier, on October 19.

CHAPTER XI

BREAKING THE GERMAN LINE

(August–September, 1918)

Foch's appointment as Generalissimo of the Allied Forces—The Anatomy of his Plan—Pincers within Pincers—German Positions on the Vesle—Movements of Generals Debeney and Humbert—Humbert's Attack at Compiègne and towards Roye—The Lassigny *Massif*—Capture by the Third French Army—Mangin's Attack in the Angle between Aisne and Oise—Co-operation between Third and Tenth French Armies—Debeney moves again—Capture of Roye and Chaulnes—Fall of Noyon—The Concerted Movements of the Three French Armies—The St. Gobain *Massif*—Dégoutte and the Sixth French Army about Soissons—The Double Convergence on St. Quentin and Laon—German Retirement from the Vesle—Mangin on the Chemin-des-Dames once more—The St. Mihiel Salient—The American First Army Concentration—Attack on Two Sides of the Salient—The American Victory and its Results—Sir Douglas Haig's Plan for Breaching the Hindenburg Line at the Scheldt Canal Sector—Havrincourt and Trescault taken—The Preliminary Attack of September 18—The Task before the Third and Fourth Armies—Attack by Pétain between the Meuse and Aire on September 20—Gouraud's Assault in Champagne—Movements by the Americans and by Mangin—Haig's Great Concerted Attack by the First, Third, and Fourth Armies—The Canal du Nord crossed—Flesquières Ridge and Bourlon Wood retaken—The Attack by the Fourth Army—American Troops' Work—The Triumph—The Hindenburg Line pierced; the Scheldt Canal won; the German Defensive System broken.

IT will be an aid to clearness of thought if the victories won by the French in July and the British in August are again considered in relation to the ideas communicated by the Generalissimo of the Allied forces, Marshal Foch, to Field-Marshal Haig at that date in July when the French strategist's first blow between the Aisne and the Marne had found the joint in the German armour.

Foch's appointment to the supreme direction had been recognized in the conferment on him by the Council of Ministers of the dignity of Marshal of France. The investiture was made by M. Poincaré and M. Clemenceau in August, 1918; and to no one did the award give greater satisfaction than the British Commander-in-Chief, who hastened to convey to General Foch, on behalf of himself and all the British armies under his command, their heartiest congratulations — “a

fitting recognition of your magnificent work for the Allies now so gloriously crowned by this second victory of the Marne”.

Sir Douglas Haig has recorded that Marshal Foch asked that “the British, French, and American armies should each prepare plans for local offensives to be taken in hand as soon as possible, with certain definite objects of a limited nature”. This implied that every one of the score of armies under the single command should be kept in a state of immediate preparedness to go forward at a few hours' notice. In this way the element of surprise was to be re-discovered; or, rather, its possession rendered no longer indispensable, since the Germans would be compelled either to disperse their strategical reserves over the whole front, or lay themselves open to a break-through if, in order to stiffen certain sectors, they weakened others.

The whole manœuvre was a mosaic of smaller manœuvres, each of which consisted in driving back one German army or army group by the pressure exerted against its neighbours. Thus, when this army or group had been pushed back beyond the alignment

Chemin des Dames, his flanks, whether they were in Artois or Champagne-Lorraine, must be left dangerously exposed to the deadly extension of the mass of manœuvre constituted by Foch's skilfully-husbanded reserves. Thanks to this method, Foch gradu-



French Official Photograph

An Historical Occasion: M. Clemenceau, the French Premier, with President Poincaré on his left, addressing General Foch after the presentation of his baton as a Marshal of France

of its neighbours, the near salient formed by its withdrawal was used to repeat the manœuvre against the neighbours each in turn.

Foch, in a word, aimed at placing Ludendorff in this dilemma: that either he should withdraw the German centre wholesale to the Meuse—a highly-complicated, delicate, and humiliating manœuvre—or else, if he elected to stand on the Aisne or the

ally drew in and tied up in a knot, in the sectors farthest removed from the German frontier, the bulk of Ludendorff's strategical reserves.

In Marshal Foch's first counter-offensive—that between the Oise and the Marne, beginning July 18—his intention, as he has himself disclosed, was mainly concerned in disengaging Paris and freeing the Paris-Nancy railway. The second stroke—that in

which Marshal Haig, in supreme control, set in motion Rawlinson and the Fourth British Army, Byng and the Third British Army, Debeney and the First French Army, and Humbert and the Third French Army against the newly-constituted German group, under von Böhn, of the armies of von Hutier and von der Marwitz—was to disengage Amiens and the Calais-Paris main line. But after that date attack quickly followed attack. No sooner had Rawlinson and Debeney stopped than Byng on their left and Humbert and Mangin on their right took up the cue. Then a little later Horne's army broke the Drocourt-Quéant switch, after which was launched the mighty blow, the fiercest tactical performance of the campaign, that broke right across the Hindenburg quadrilateral in the north. This was the nearest approach to a breakthrough, and, the German centre being pierced, the Allied right, formed by Guillaumat, Gouraud, and the Americans, went forward simultaneously with the Allied left, King Albert's group, Plumer and Birdwood, the pincers within the pincers.

The secret of Foch was that of driving the enemy before him by an unparalleled series of enveloping movements, each merging into the next. Furthermore, the two outer claws of the enveloping pincers, as they drew nearer to the north-east and the south-east of the main German armies, were narrowing ever more and more the avenue through which these armies had hoped to withdraw across the Meuse and the Rhine.

Before considering the results which

were the outcome of these plans, it is necessary to pick up the threads of the movements of the French armies south of the Oise, with especial reference to those of Humbert, Mangin, Degoutte, De Mitry, Berthelot and Guillaumat, Gouraud, and the Americans. On August 3 General Mangin, having secured Soissons, occupied the left bank of the Aisne from Soissons down to Venizel. The Americans pressed on to Fismes on the Vesle, while on the right French and British troops reached the line Branscourt-Champigny. On August 4 the German rear-guards covering the retirement over the Vesle offered a strong resistance to the Allies between Menizon and Champigny. American detachments gained a footing at various places on the right bank of the Vesle, at Le Venteux Farm above Braine, and La Grange Farm, east of Fismes, and at Jonchery. Heavy rains in early August set the Vesle in flood, and made more difficult its marshes and *marées*; and here, for nearly three weeks, before and while the new battle of Amiens was being decided farther north and west, the troops of Dégoutte, including the American divisions, faced the strongly posted German divisions on the northern side of the river.

The Germans showed no signs of reducing their own forces; they began to dig themselves in on the Vesle heights, and a division of the Prussian Guards (4th) was brought to the sector opposite the Americans at Fismes; and continual encounters took place at and about the bridge-heads. But these were indications of a static,

rather than a dynamic, play of forces, and are to be considered merely as attempts on the part of either adversary to find the other's strength or intentions. Foch's intention, which the enemy did not divine, was merely to keep them in suspended animation here while the blow which was a corollary to the Battle of Amiens was maturing. We have spoken of the concerted movement, directed by Marshal Haig, of Rawlinson's, Debeney's (First French), and Humbert's (Third French) armies. The share of Humbert did not begin till the third day of the combined offensive of Rawlinson and Debeney. Debeney, having on the night of August 9 pushed forward his right towards Montdidier, General Humbert, on the morning of the 10th, took a hand in the affair, marching north also towards Roye with the idea that Montdidier and a large number of German soldiers would be caught between the two lines of advance. This actually happened.

General Humbert's first aims were modest. All he was asked to do on the first day was to reach the road from Montdidier to Compiègne, between Rollot and Cuvilly, and from there a line drawn eastwards through Ressons and Chevincourt—an average advance of 3 miles, though he was to go farther if he could. The Germans expected his attack, though not that it would be made so soon, and as a precautionary measure had begun to withdraw during the night of August 9-10 from some of the positions immediately in front of him, so that his task was made by that much the easier.

General Humbert's full-dress attack began at dawn, with rather fewer Tanks than Pétain had allotted to the other French movements, and his barrage started with his infantry. As a consequence, the Germans, taking to their dug-outs for shelter from the barrage, found the infantry and the Tanks among them while they were still waiting for the attack to begin; and Humbert's *poilus* reached Compiègne and the assigned villages an hour after they had started. The day was yet young, and, elated by their easy success, the French pushed on north in the direction of Roye. By the evening they had put on another 4 miles on the left of their advance, and an unexpected mile in the difficult ground on their right. So that by the night of August 10 they stood on the line Boulogne-la-Grasse-Conchy-Ricquebourg - Elencourt - Chevrin - court. How completely Humbert's dash caught the Germans unawares was shown by the stacks of letters waiting for the post, the piles of clothing and boots, machine-gun belts, cardboard boxes, and paper bandages found in the entrenchments; as well as by the prisoners found afterwards hiding in the cornfields and orchards. One such prisoner pointed out the dug-out in which his colonel was still hiding.

The enlargement of Humbert's success beyond the original estimate enabled the general in supreme command to alter the rôle assigned to the Third French Army in his elastic plan. Instead of marching north towards Roye, it was wheeled round to the right, facing eastwards, in order to

join more directly in the general scheme by making an attack on the Lassigny (Thiescourt) *massif*, thus to facilitate far more effectively the march of Debeney and Rawlinson towards Roye. This was a very severe undertaking for Humbert's army. The *massif* which was to be the block of resistance, was particularly well suited to a retarding action on the part of the Germans. The main line of the heights of which it was constituted is thickly wooded, and stretches eastwards for about 8 miles from Ressons (on the little River Matz curling round the hills) to the valley of the Devette, which, like the Matz, falls into the Oise. The whole area between the two tributaries consists of a jumble of crests and ridges, divided by steep ravines and diverging from a longitudinal spine like the fronds of a fern. The spine runs through the Bois de Thiescourt: there are spurs reaching to the Bois de la Reserve and the Montagne de Porquericourt beyond, and these again reach on to Mont Renaud, overlooking Noyon. Once this fretwork of heights was dominated, the French would have the whole of the *massif* from Plémont, near Lassigny, to Mont Renaud, near Noyon, and the whole work of the German offensive in the previous June on this neighbourhood would be undone.

On the morning of August 11 Humbert's army made another spring forward in the new direction, gaining in all 2 miles; and next day it was still forcing its way forward, though the progress became slower, especially on the left, as the enemy brought up

reinforcements. The difficulties experienced by Humbert's troops are easy to appreciate, for at each stop of their progress they found themselves exposed to the fire of a new array of machine-guns placed in well-protected positions on the plateau above. The machine-gun at one time threatened to revolutionize warfare; it would have done so had it not been met by the Tank; but in the positions assaulted by Humbert there was no place for the machine-gun's antidote. Consequently the principle of the attack consisted in making the advance on two sides of each fresh obstacle, and so, by placing the enemy between two columns of advancing troops, forcing his centre to retire. In this way one body of troops pushed forward east of the Bois de Thiescourt as far as Ecouvillon, and a second, on the other side of the Bois, steadily worked up to St. Claude Farm, just north-east of Mareuil, on the Lassigny road. A more minute example of the same process was worked out by this column, which first surrounded the hill of Vignemont, close to Marque Eglise, on the Roye railway, while in the meantime another unit attacked and carried Margny a step farther on. Then they took Le Plessier, again a little in advance, surrounded Hill 160, and carried Bellinglise, the next hamlet, and finally rushed St. Claude Farm directly. The whole process was repeated on the vaster scale by armies and groups of armies. It was, in short, the method which has already been described earlier in the chapter as the keynote of Marshal Foch's strategy—

armies moving on either side of an army that was held up.

On the 13th Humbert's left gained possession of the park of Plessis-le-Roye, a mile below Lassigny; his centre gained a footing in Belval, under the southern slopes of Mont Plémont, and his right went forward a mile north of Cambronne and established itself in Ecouvillon. On the 14th the right took Ribecourt, and the others of the converging columns withstood the counter-attacks of new German divisions thrown in to hold them back. They were now a long step nearer Noyon. They had not yet gained the Lassigny Thiescourt *massif*, but they had rendered it useless to the Germans for a jumping-off place. There was, however, no real question of any German offensive reaction; the only thing they could do was to try to hold on. As far as the Lassigny *massif* was concerned, that hope vanished on the 15th, when Humbert's army captured the highest point, L'Alliche Farm, against a strong enemy resistance, and his right wing, moving out from Ribecourt, established itself astride the road to Noyon. On the 16th the French line ran north-west, so as to include the *massif*, and, passing a mile and a half south of Lassigny town, turned north across the Matz to join up with Debeney's army, near Canny. On the 17th no event of importance took place except the capture of Canny. But, on the 18th, General Humbert's movement having achieved as much as, if not more than, was expected of it, Marshal Foch let loose on his right the Tenth French Army, under

General Mangin, which last had been heard of in the neighbourhood of Soissons.

Before leaving the doings of Humbert's army to consider those of Mangin, a tribute should be paid to the workmanlike devotion with which the former's troops tackled their task.



French Official Photograph.

General Humbert, commanding the Third French Army

From the beginning of the attack to August 21 they never stopped fighting. The whole country was a maze of old trenches. Those of the original French front lines (from 1914-7) covered a belt 2 miles wide, and in these and in other positions the Germans fought according to their most stubborn traditions. They did not, could not, run away. Constantly the French found themselves in front of new machine-gun positions which

could not be taken by direct attack: over and over again such positions had to be circumvented by men who crawled up on either side of them till within 10 or 20 yards, and who then rushed them with grenades. Some nests of machine-guns held out for hours even when surrounded. In one strong point, after four hours' fighting, the French who burst in found five machine-guns and twelve surviving Germans who did not cry "Kamerad", but fought while they lived. It was all grenade fighting, and the supplies of grenades sometimes ran short. The Germans, keen to note, always counter-attacked when they perceived a slackening. In this way small isolated parts were taken and lost and taken again before that little bit of the general advance was made good, and sometimes a whole regiment would have to retire because its flank was in the air, or because it found itself suddenly enfiladed. But always the advance went on, sweeping up machine-guns, *Minnenwerfers*, ammunition, and prisoners in its path.

Mangin advanced against the German positions in the angle which the Aisne makes with the Oise, and his attack may be viewed as assisting that of Humbert, though acting on a parallel, rather than on a convergent line. He advanced on a north-easterly parallel between Carlepont and Fontenoy to a depth of $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles on a front of $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The plateau on the west of Nampoel was occupied by his left, while his right took Nouvron and Vingre, and the next day Marsani. In the two days' fighting he captured 2500 prisoners, and the

Germans once again had to eat up reserves in order to hold a thrust from a new direction. Moreover, his movement and intentions were co-ordinated with those of Humbert, who, still keeping up a steady pressure, crept nearer Lassigny, and nearer the northern declination of the *massif*, while taking Fresnieres in his stride.

It was Mangin, however, who momentarily came down to the foot-lights. He was but beginning his part, and on August 20 he extended his attack from a point east of Fontenoy on the Aisne to Bailly on the Oise—a front of 16 miles. By night-fall his veterans had advanced an average depth of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles on the whole of this front. His right wing captured the villages of Courtil, Osly, Cuisy-en-Alment, Tartiers, and Veza-pontin. His centre gained a footing on the plateau north of Vassens, besides driving the Germans out of Blerancourdelle and Lambray. His left reached the southern border of the forest of Ourscamp and fought its way victoriously to the outskirts of Carlepont and Caisnes. On the 21st, when far to the north, another battering-ram was set in motion by the attack of Byng's Third British Army. Mangin stood within 5 miles of Noyon. On the morning of the 21st, after repulsing a counter-attack at the Soissons end of their line, Mangin's army continued to edge farther along the valley of the Oise. The Germans were forced from a strong position in the forest of Carlepont to a precarious situation in a kind of narrow pocket between the Oise and the Noyon-Soissons road, only 4 miles from east

to west at its base and 2 miles at its mouth between Cuts and the Oise at Pontoise.

While the Germans were considering the problem of withdrawing without loss—and of making a corresponding retreat from their position at Ribecourt on the north bank—the French airmen had a cloudless sky and few German aeroplanes to hinder them in their task of bombing and machine-gunning the convoys and the Oise bridges. Moreover, Mangin's right was also advancing round about Pommiers. Throughout the 21st his army continued its advance without a check. By ten o'clock it was 5 miles east of Noyon on the Oise at Breigny, and 10 miles to the north of Soissons on the Ailette at La Quincy. Here we may pause to observe again the movements of his *confrère*, Humbert, on the other side of the Oise. He now held the whole of the *massif*, as well as the low ground beyond it to the Divette, across which, from the edge of the plateau behind, he looked towards the wooded heights converging in the Oise valley on Mont Renaud, barely 2 miles short of Noyon. Humbert had waited till Mangin had swept up to the Oise, and the task of clearing the *massif* had thereby become easier. Each separate part of the joint advance of these two French armies had moved with the regularity of clockwork, just at the right moment—patiently when there was need of patience, swiftly when speed was essential, but always irresistibly.

Mangin's advance up to the Oise and the Ailette had now put him on

the south flank of the difficult bit of country north of the Oise between Noyon and Chauny, ready, if the necessity arose, to combine with any turning movement made on it from the north. The master-stroke of his advance was the neat way in which he began it by the innocent-looking operations on very small fronts, which gave him, at a small cost, positions from which he could expand his front, so that it threatened to turn the enemy's right and compelled him to retire from the forest between Pontoise and Pimprez. Mangin could now, if need be, pivot on his right, and, turning east, sweep the enemy clear from between the Oise and the Ailette. On the night of August 22 he held the southern banks of the Oise and the Ailette from Sempigny as far as the railway line from Coucy le Château to the east of Salens; and some of his patrols were over the Ailette. Noyon was outflanked; a new salient between Roye and Noyon was in process of being looped. That was the small pincers in operation; meanwhile, as described in the preceding chapter, at the other end of the large pincers the British were advancing on a 30-mile front north of Péronne, and on the road from Arras were threatening Bapaume.

Mangin continued to press forward along the line Crecy-au-Mont-Chairgny; but the ball was now handed on to Debeney and the First French Army, who, at the other end of the looped salient, pushed on to Roye. On the Avre, as in the Ailette district, the Germans, knowing the meaning of the pressure that was being applied



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY

W. WALTER BARNETT

*General Sir Edmund Allenby, K. C. B.
Commanding-in-Chief, Egyptian Expeditionary Force, in Palestine*

to them, had tried to reduce it by a series of counter-attacks. On the night of August 26 they sallied out from Roye to assault—at any rate to reconnoitre—the French positions in front of the town. Next morning General Debeney supplied them with the information they wanted. Before they were well back in their lines he took the offensive to the south of St.



Map illustrating General Humbert's Attack on Noyon and the Lassigny Massif

Mard, which is a mile west of Roye, and after fierce hand-to-hand fighting in the streets of Laucourt, a mile farther on, got astride the road leading thence into Roye and pushed into St. Gilles, a suburb of Roye town. The fighting here, like that which Humbert's men had experienced, was all with grenade and bayonet, and for much the same reason—because the ground was criss-crossed everywhere with old trenches and old dug-outs renovated by their latest occupants.

But Debeney's army meant busi-

ness. In twenty-four hours his troops took 1100 prisoners in this kind of warfare, and though able to push on more easily north of Roye than south of it, made an advance over a front of $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles, in some places to a distance of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles. It was an irregular, saw-like line which they occupied at the end of the day, but at several points they were well over the road from Roye to Peronne, so that Roye, being outflanked, fell automatically without being assaulted, and Chaulnes was marked to follow. It fell while the army was still congratulating itself on the second day's work, and villages began to fall like ripe apples into French hands. The Germans had only one sound tactical course: it was to reduce their salient while they could do so without disaster; and they retreated with a rapidity that did them credit. At Debeney's end of the salient they abandoned everything as far as Nesle, and let the French right up to the Canal du Nord, about all the way between Nesle and Noyon—a great slice of territory, or of salient, whichever way one views it. General Humbert also was busy; his hard-won advance now became easier, and his army went with a bound to Porquericourt, on the reverse of the Porquericourt ridge, to Vauchelles and to Pont l'Evêque, below Mont Renaud, and on the railway to Noyon. The Divette was left far behind. On the 28th the French advance was as much as 6 miles in places, and Noyon's fall was clearly assured. On the railway the French found three trains laden with war material, a testimony of the Germans' haste to get away.

Noyon was encircled on August 29. Its fate was made certain by the occurrences of the 28th. From Noyon and Nesle two big highways run north and east to Ham, and a third from Noyon to Chauny along the valley of the Oise. The first two of these roads now came under the guns of Debeney and Humbert; the third was commanded by Mangin, to say nothing of the aeroplanes by which all three roads were continually bombed and swept with gun-fire. The Germans had no other course but to continue their retreat, and eventually to abandon the narrowing and shortening salient of Nesle-Noyon-Chauny. General Mangin was all the while adding his share of incontrovertible reasons. On the extreme left of his front he crossed the Oise at Pont l'Évêque, and established connection with General Humbert close to Noyon. (On his right, at Soissons, where he was pivoting, he crossed the Aisne through the suburb of St. Vaast, and reached a point to where the heights of the Aisne began to rise; this manœuvre was a prelude to his forthcoming operations towards the Chemin-des-Dames and Laon.) By the afternoon of the 28th Noyon was threatened on three sides; by night it had fallen. Its capture was carried out by a French division, three of whose regiments carried on their flags the coveted Cross of the Legion of Honour, won in actions on the Somme, the Aisne, in Champagne, and in eight attacks at Verdun. With Zouaves on the wings, and Tirailleurs in the centre, it converged on Noyon in the early morning of the 28th, and, in spite of machine-guns and counter-

attacks, carried, one by one, the suburbs and the outlying villages, until it had completely ringed the town round.

When the town was won, another barrier confronted Humbert's men—Mont St. Simeon, at the angle between the roads to Ham and Chauny, strongly fortified and important to the Germans whether they elected to stand or to retreat. But even at this moment it was certain that their tenure would not be long, for if General Mangin advanced on them from the south, or General Humbert outflanked them from the north, delay would be more than dangerous to them. They were quite able to see that, and, good tacticians as they were, realized to the full that they must expend men, not with any intention of holding on too long, but with the aim of holding back General Mangin long enough. Although General Mangin had crossed the Ailette at Villette and Courbesseaux he was being given everywhere a hard fight. Counter-attack followed counter-attack, and the line continually swayed backwards and forwards. It was a costly defence to the Germans, because in order to maintain it they brought up twelve new, but by no means fresh, divisions, and disposed of them, not in echelon formation behind the lines, but on the crowded front. In this the Germans were departing from the principle of defence in depth which the war had long established, and which the Germans had long adopted; they were forced to depart from it because they could not resist the vigour of the French attack except by numbers. But this enforced departure from a sound rule cost them

dear, because of the execution which the French artillery, much more numerous and able than the German, inflicted on the close-packed ranks.

Any hesitation that the Germans may have felt about abandoning their positions facing Noyon swiftly disappeared when, on General Humbert's left, General Debeney's army, crossing the Canal du Nord on September 1, advanced eastwards on a front which would take them to Guiscard and Ham. They kept close touch with Humbert's army, which began by patient and difficult advances against an enemy who was using every device to dam the flowing tide, including that of sacrificing his rear-guards by using them for vigorous counter-attacks. Too late in the day the Germans tried to evolve methods of defence against the increasing number of Tanks, not merely by blowing up bridges or creating artificial marshes to impede them, but by bringing special anti-tank guns into the firing-line, and instructing their infantry to aim at putting the Tanks out of action by throwing grenades under their caterpillar wheels. The idea was sound, but the cost to their infantry of these tactics of the "living wall" of defence was a good deal more than that of steadily retiring in echelon, because, in order to execute them, the German infantryman had to go out to meet the Tanks instead of leaving the job to his artillery.

Debeney crossed the double obstacle of the Somme and adjoining canal at Epancourt, on the extreme left on September 4, thus taking the first

step of his journey from Nesle to Ham, while on the 5th Humbert started on his journey towards Chauny. When he should reach there the problem of attacking the St. Gobain *massif* would arise; and meanwhile, on his right, General Mangin was taking steps to make the solution easier by edging his left closer and closer to the western side of the *massif* while forcing the enemy to give him standing-room on the battle-field of the plateaux which border it to the south.

Foch had now called up Dégoutte and the Sixth Army to second Mangin. Mangin had first crossed the Ailette on August 29, while at the same time, with Dégoutte's co-operation, and helped by some American detachments, he continued to press the Germans back from the north and east of Soissons. Here one may pause to survey the significance of the double advance of his wings when co-ordinated with the other armies to right and left of him. (1) General Debeney had now crossed the Somme on a 6-mile front between Epancourt and Offay—a very fine piece of work, not accomplished without many acts of individual daring in getting across the marshes and *marées*—and was on the Ham-Péronne line west of Maligny, 4 miles north-west of Ham. (2) General Humbert, south-east of Ham, which was evidently doomed, was past the group of hills between Noyon and Chauny; his cavalry had found Chauny unoccupied, and he was well on to Terguier, close to La Fère. (3) General Mangin's left had taken Petit Barisis, Coucy-

de-Château, which the Germans long ago had destroyed, and Coucy-le-Ville, and had apparently stampeded the Germans out of this very difficult bit of country. His right (3a) had occupied, by September 6, all the ground between the Soissons-Coucy road and the Soissons-Anizy railway. (4) Part of General Dégoutte's army was continuing its forward movement up to the canal and the Aisne as far as Maizy, 18 miles due east of Soissons.

A consideration of the map will disclose that Debeney and Humbert were converging on St. Quentin, and Mangin and Dégoutte on Laon. The armies were all about 12 miles from their twin objective; Mangin, on the Vauxaillon plateau, being nearest to Laon. Twelve miles in these days of open warfare was not a great deal; and with the Hindenburg line smashed near Quéant it grew perceptibly less every day. Moreover, Ludendorff by this date had already begun to be apprehensive for the right (western) flank of the Seventh and Ninth German Armies on the Vesle, and as early as the 4th had ordered them to retire towards the Aisne. The Franco-American force which, under De Mitry, had been watching these armies from the south bank of the Vesle, but

which, in accordance with Foch's strategy, had not wasted extravagant effort in assaulting them frontally, immediately crossed the river and occupied the line Vauxcéré-Blanzy-Le Grand Hameau. The next day,



Map showing the Relative Positions of the British and French Armies in Mid-September, 1918

following hard on the Germans' retreating footsteps, the Franco-American troops north of the Vesle took the villages of Longueval and Clennes, and reached the line Viel-Arcy-Revillon.

Two days later Mangin crowned his work by capturing Fort Condé, that abandoned stronghold which stands on the plateau dominating the

western end of the Chemin-des-Dames, and French troops re-entered Celles-sur-Aisne. Vauxaillon was reached on the same day, and the French climbed once again the western slopes of the Laffaux plateau. The circumstances were very different from those of the bitter attacks of Nivelle's offensive and its corollaries; but the Germans made a hardly less desperate effort to turn back the hands of the clock. On the night of the 10th, and on the following day, their counter-attacks on the new war positions followed in quick succession, but without success. The harder the French were struck the fiercer their *riposte*; and on the 14th Mangin stormed the historic points of Allemant and Laffaux hill. They were taken; the French were now immovably established on the Chemin-des-Dames at its most important end; and on the 15th they occupied the Mont-des-Singes, which overlooks the railway that leads to Laon through the Vauxaillon defile. Vailly also fell to them.

But before September 15 a new blow had fallen on the German front. It had been known for some time that the First American Army, under General Pershing, was concentrating on the Plain of the Woëvre, to the south-east of Verdun, but when the American Commander-in-Chief launched an attack against that St. Mihiel salient, which the enemy had preserved unaltered for more than four years, the Germans were, despite their protestations, taken by surprise. General Fuchs, the commander of the German army holding the salient, knew of the concentration but not of its strength;

and although the Americans had already won their spurs as fighting-men, they had hitherto been brigaded with French or British troops, and had not fought as an independent army under their own commander and staff. German Head-quarters, in explaining the loss of the St. Mihiel salient to the German public, remarked that its abandonment had "been under consideration for years"; but it is certain that, though at this crisis in the German army's fortunes the St. Mihiel salient was an embarrassment rather than an asset, they had no intention of being hustled out of it in the costly way in which their eviction was in fact effected.

The American army was principally concentrated, on September 13, 1918, along a 10-mile front extending from Xivray (west) to Fey-en-Haye (east). Its left thus touched the Forest d'Apremont, where it linked up with the French; its right rested on the Bois-le-Prêtre, overlooking the Moselle. The French on the American army's left were, and had been long, entrenched round the strongly-fortified Camp des Romans and St. Mihiel, and on the western face of the salient French and American troops, brigaded together, held the line of the heights of the Meuse from Les Eparges down to Spada and thence across the Meuse to Chauvancourt, where the Germans had their bridge-head on the western side of the Meuse. General Fuchs had in the salient six divisions, including two Austro-Hungarian, which were on the western face between Combres and Spada, and two in the lowest corner of the salient. The

attack against him opened at one o'clock on the morning of September 12 with the comparatively old-fashioned violent bombardment, which, as a fact, could not well be dispensed with, since the enemy lines had been very strongly fortified and the country was made difficult by high ridges and thick woods, which offered every facility for the hidden machine-gun. After four hours of this fire, Pershing loosed his young Americans in the rain.

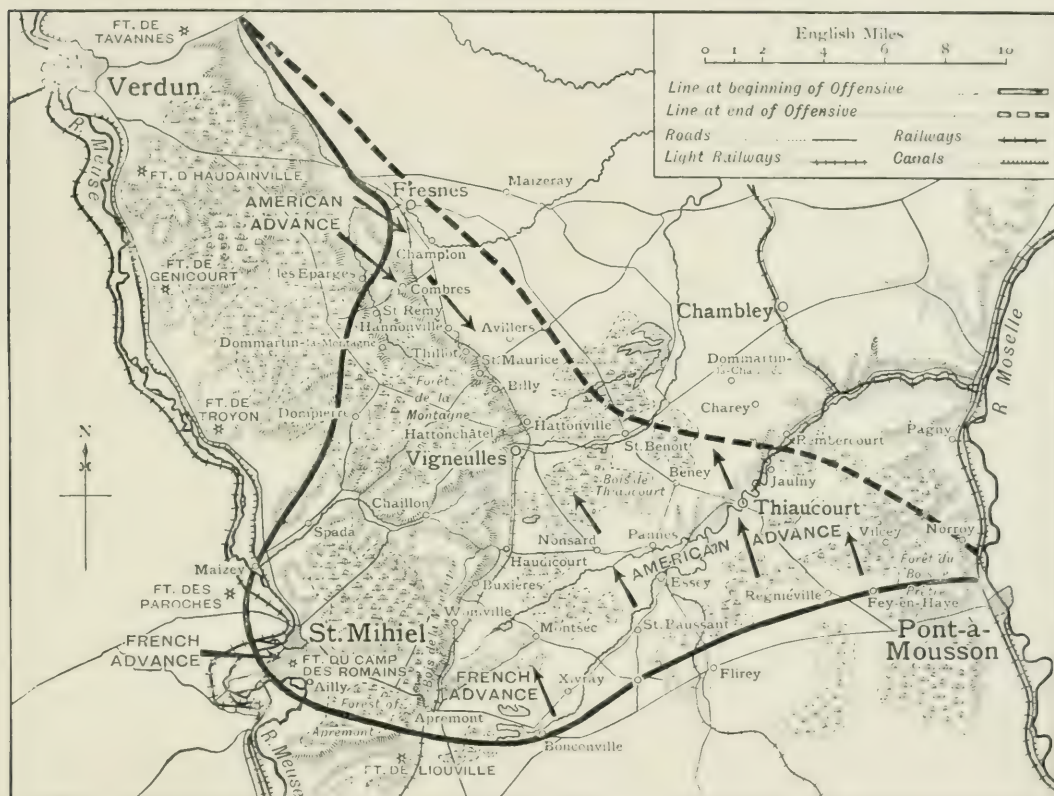
Dawn saw whole fleets of Tanks, manned by French and Americans, moving out of their shelters to lead the attack. They lumbered on, but the Germans offered little opposition. The American "doughboys" followed in open order, ploughing their way through the mud, and hardly at all disconcerted by the feeble artillery resistance. At one point near Seicheprey, where the Americans had previously had bitter encounters with the Germans, there was stiff resistance, machine-gun fire sweeping the American ranks, but the Tanks and artillery soon cleared that up, and at seven o'clock in the morning the ridge in front of Seicheprey was passed, and the whole line was sweeping forward in "open warfare". The southern advance went on without much check all day, and by six in the evening the Americans had reached Thiaucourt, and intercepted the German retreat along the light railway between Thiaucourt and the apex of the salient at St. Mihiel. Astonishingly little resistance had been met with from the German infantry, many of whom had been surprised in their dug-outs. The line

reached on this sector was roughly Heudicourt, Nonsard, Pannes, Thiaucourt. Meanwhile the French troops holding the apex of the salient advanced to pin the enemy there, as well as to cover the flank of the southern American army; and these attackers infiltrated the Forest of Apremont and outflanked St. Mihiel.

At eight o'clock on the same morning, three hours after the southern assault had gone forward, a second American attack was launched on the western face of the salient, on a line running from Les Eparges to Seuzey. French troops went forward with this attack, which had a harder task than the first one, especially about Combres, where an Austro-Hungarian division put up a fight, and where the Germans had a plethora of machine-guns hidden on the wooded hills; but early in the afternoon the attack had done everything it had been asked to do, and the lines of the pincers were closing in on the salient from Les Eparges to Combres, thence to Dommartin and Seuzey; thence again on the south from Apremont to Mont Sec, and north-east to Thiaucourt. While the sun was yet high, General Fuchs had realized the prudence of retreat, and was getting out of his harassed corner as fast as he could. Breaking up into small parties, some Germans escaped through the hills, and desperate efforts were made to get the German guns out by the Vigneulles road; but the rains of the previous days, which had hampered the Tanks, now impeded the guns, and the bombing (aeroplanes added their share to the work of the Franco-American artillery, which had as a

target an ever-narrowing bottle-neck through which no German sought to escape. The neck would have been entirely closed much earlier had it not been for the resistance offered by the Austro-Hungarian divisions between Combres and Spada. But, as it was,

some serious fighting in getting through the Bois Nonsard and the Bois Vigneulles, but the American losses were relatively light. Those of the Germans were not: they lost 16,000 prisoners and 200 guns, as well as 150 square miles of territory.



Cutting off the St. Mihiel Salient: map showing approximately the Allied line before and after the Franco-American attack in September, 1918

American patrols in front of the attack on this face entered the village of Vigneulles, at the junction of the roads, at midnight on Thursday, and by eight o'clock in the morning the salient was completely closed, for the southern and western forces joined hands.

The southern detachments had had

The strategical and moral results of the victory were considerable. The restoration of direct communication between Verdun and Commercy, along the Meuse valley railway, facilitated the supply of the French forces at Verdun; and the excellent staff work and the tactical leading, both of which were commended by the French,

were as reassuring to the Allies as they were disconcerting to the enemy, who retired to a line not too well fortified and linking Bezonvaux, Fresnes (north of it), St. Benoit, and the Moselle above Pont-a-Mousson.

One might perhaps say that by this movement Foch's right wing was keyed up to its proper position, because one result of the victory was that the Crown Prince's communications were prospectively threatened, and that the German Higher Command had to consider the possibility alike of a movement here as well as the convergence on Laon with which the armies of Mangin and Dégoutte threatened them. The immediate consequence was that the necessity of a still wider distribution of their reserves was imposed on them, while the initiative or the possibility of regaining it was farther than ever removed from them. At the same time a new responsibility for defence was added to their commitments by the pressing of another pedal of the organ with which Foch was playing them to retreat.

The British armies were again on the move. They began to advance on Cambrai, which was the bastion of the northern half of the German power, as La Fère and Laon, which the French armies sought, were the twin bastions of the south. Sir Douglas Haig began to prise open the door of the bastion he was destined to take at Havrincourt, where the Canal du Nord, which was the advance moat of Cambrai, turns to the north. Above Havrincourt the German position would have been

very costly to storm, because open slopes like the glacis of a fortress led down to it, and could be swept by every sort of gun. But south of Havrincourt the main Hindenburg Line went away from the canal at an angle, thus:—A, running south eastwards across the Beaucamp La Vacquerie and Bonairs ridges till it reached the inner moat of the Scheldt Canal at Bantouzelle. Thence it ran in front of the canal down to St. Quentin. The defences here will be presently described. Sir Douglas Haig's preliminary operations, which began a day before the American attack on the St. Mihiel salient was set in motion, and so diverted German attention to some extent from that productive operation, were designed to get within striking distance of the Scheldt Canal sector of the Hindenburg Line.

On this day, September 12, the 4th and 6th Corps of the Third British Army started what seemed at this period a mere local attack on a 5-mile front. Four divisions were employed, the 37th, 62nd, and 2nd, and New Zealanders, and the first two of these had the honour of taking Havrincourt and Trescault. These and other positions were of great value for jumping-off places. A good deal lower down the British line, where it was approaching touch with the First French Army in front of St. Quentin, the 9th Corps and the Australians continued to skirmish skilfully forward, making here a gain and there a gain, till they had captured Holnon Wood, and Maissemy, where the Germans nearly cut through in

the March offensive; and began to get near Templeux-le-Guerard and Le Verguier, the abandonment of which, in that March retreat, had been one of the signals of General Gough's discomfiture. This was all done by the night of September 17.

The preliminaries in order, a more extended attack began without a day's delay. Next morning, with heavy rain christening the "push", the Third and Fourth British Armies went forward on a 17-mile front from Gouzeaucourt (below Havrincourt) to Holnon, where the First French Army lent a hand. The success they won was symptomatic of the new driving force which certainty of victory had implanted in the Allies. A deep, continuous, and well-organized belt of defences, part of them old British lines constructed in the winter of 1917-8, part new fortifications run up with German industry since April, lay in front of them. They went through it to the depth of 3 miles, and the fifteen British divisions employed in the assault defeated twenty German divisions who in vain attempted to stand up against it, taking 12,000 of them prisoners, as well as 100 of their guns. The hardest fighting was on the extreme right, towards St. Quentin, and at the left centre about Epehy (another landmark of the March retreat), and in these sectors the troops of the 6th, 12th, 18th, and 58th Divisions had to fight hard for every foot they won and every gun they took. But by nightfall the last spark of German resistance at Epehy had been quenched, and next morning the positions on the extreme right at

Gricourt, which had to be taken in order to get ready for the next step, had also been cleared up. Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch selects for special mention, in addition to the divisions already named, the 1st, 17th, 21st, and 74th (Major-General E. S. Girdwood commanding) Divisions, and the 1st Australian and 4th Australian (Major-General Sir E. Sinclair MacLagan commanding) Divisions.

The pieces for the momentous, the all-important, attack on the breast-plate of the Hindenburg Line were now set. It was a tense moment. The extended preliminaries, though they had raised by their success the spirit of the British armies to a mood in which doubt of victory had no place, had none the less taken toll of the numbers and of the reserves. The successes had been won at a loss trifling in proportion to the results, but, in the most victorious fighting, losses mount up, especially in battles where the machine-gun has to be beaten down. Was it possible, with numbers dwindling, and with men who had been pushing for seven weeks, to break through a line which in face of all the world had been exalted as a line that could not be broken?

Be sure these considerations were in the mind of the British commander, who, thinker as well as soldier, understood quite well what would be the results of failure, or even of a success too small to warrant its cost. But his mind was made up. He believed his soldiers could do it, and he was resolved not to waste a moment in putting his faith to the test. He has told briefly and in simple words what

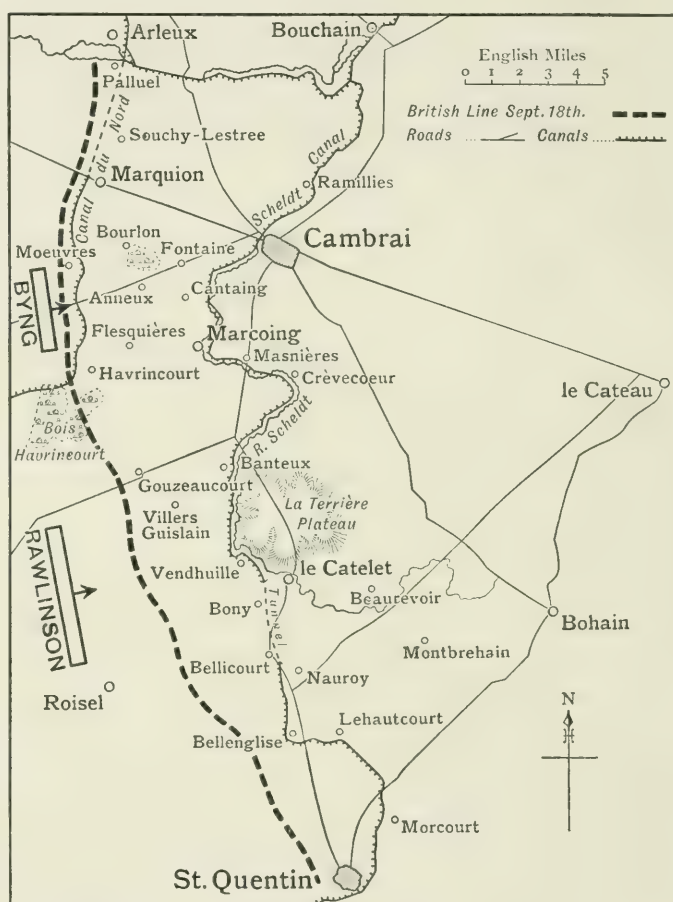
manner of task was before his armies.

Between Bantouzelle, in front of the Scheldt Canal and St. Quentin, the German defences lay usually on the farther side of the canal, though sometimes on the hither bank.

The canal was not the sole, or even the chief enemy line of resistance; it was part of a much more complicated and formidable whole, the outstanding characteristic of which was the skill with which it had been laid out so as to escape bombardment. The canal, much of which was dry, was principally used as a place in which to ensconce garrisons of the main defensive lines during a bombardment, a purpose for which the deep cuttings where it lay fitted it very well. The cuttings through which the canal ran were often 60 feet in depth; between Bellicourt and Vendhuille a tunnel covered it for $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles. In the sides of the cuttings the enemy had constructed numerous tunnelled dug-outs and concrete shelters; and along their top edges had concealed admirably a number of armoured gun emplacements. The tunnel made an immense dug-out for troops and was connected with the trenches above by shafts. South of Bellicourt the cuttings grew shallower, till the canal ran almost on

the level at Bellenglise, where its water ceased.

On the hither side of the canal south of Bellicourt were two thoroughly up-to-date lines of continuous trench,



Map illustrating the British Attack on the Hindenburg Line between Cambrai and St. Quentin, September, 1918

one of them $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles, the other $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the canal itself. But, except at the tunnel, the veritable Hindenburg Line, another double row of trenches, was on the other side of the canal, and was linked up by communication-trenches with the first-line defences.

This was where the great British effort was to be made. It was not, however, to be an isolated thrust, but one co-ordinated with others which would inhibit any German transference of a dominating body of reserves to any threatened point. After the successful attack on September 18 of the Third and Fourth British Armies, when they broke through the forward defences of the Hindenburg Line, no damaging attack was set in motion on any army front, British, Belgian, French, or American, for more than a week, so that the military critics of the *Berliner Tageblatt* and the *Kölnische Zeitung* were again able to assure their German readers that the worst was over. General Ludendorff knew that the worst was to come. On September 20, General Foch confirmed his knowledge by beginning the great offensive movement which extended from the North Sea to the Meuse. General Pétain led the way with an attack by the Franco-American armies in Champagne. The battle opened with a resounding success. Pershing's First American Army had been transferred from the ground won in the St. Mihiel salient on the right bank of the Meuse, to that left bank where so many bitter struggles for Hill 304 and the Mort Homme had taken place. Von Gallwitz, the German group commander, appears to have been imperfectly aware of the transfer or of the meaning; but whatever the state of his knowledge he was unable to prevent the Americans, who, together with the French, attacked on a 20-mile front between the Meuse and the

Aire, from bursting through the German positions in front of Montfaucon, which had been the base of the left-bank attacks on Verdun. Montfaucon fell, and with it the equally important tactical position of Varennes. The Germans were thrown back to an average depth of 7 miles, and in the first day of the attack lost 5000 prisoners.

That was the extreme right attack. On the other side of the Argonne Forest the Lion of the Argonne awoke. Gouraud's troops, the same who at a critical moment had justified the tactics of their leader in withdrawing from the heights of Moronvilliers by their stand against Ludendorff's last onslaught east of Rheims, were unleashed. They went forward to add new wreaths to their colours, and stormed the network of trenches (east of Moronvilliers) between Tahure and Navarin farm, in which the enemy left, in their retreat from them, hundreds of machine-guns and 7000 German prisoners. That was the first day's work; on the next (27th) Gouraud's men began again, crossed the Challerange railway and put themselves in position to attack the Monthois-Argeuil defensive line. Thus in two days the formidable Moronvilliers position, which had been won and lost again, was turned, and the lines between Tahure and Navarin, which had first been assaulted in Joffre's costly experiment of 1915, and had ever since then appeared impregnable, were captured.

Finally, before turning to the co-ordinated and contemporaneous action of the British armies, notice must be

taken of the subsequent operations of Franco-American forces, as well as those under the command of Gouraud and of Mangin. On the 28th, von Gallwitz, perceiving his danger, dispatched all the troops he could transfer across the Meuse to hold back the Americans, who thus found the resistance stiffening in a marked way. But the Americans, in their own phrase, had "got going", and in spite of the new and strong offensive pushed their line forward to Apremont on the Aire and Brioules on the Meuse. Meanwhile Gouraud's men added 3000 more prisoners and the villages of Somme-Py and St. Marie-à-Py, to their bag. Moreover, once again Mangin was moving, and on the Chemin-des-Dames he took Malmaison, which in the same year as Nivelle's offensive and Pétain's reconstruction had given its name to a battle, as Moronvilliers had done. Mangin also penetrated Pinon Forest.

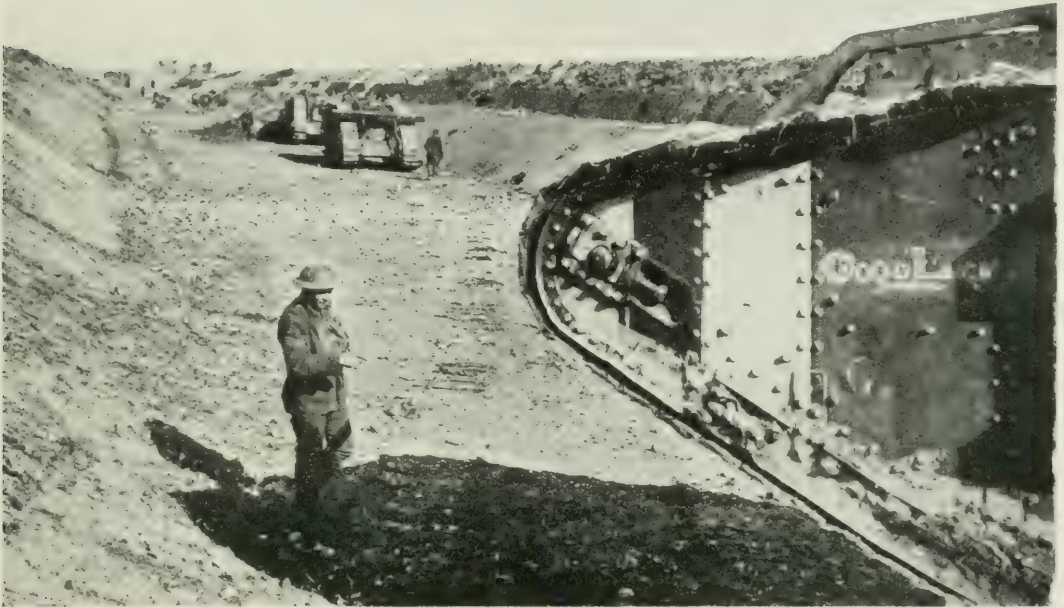
This was on September 28. By that date General Haig had won the first round in his attack on the Hindenburg Line. His plan took the form of delivering a very heavy bombardment, beginning on the night of September 26, along the front of all three of his armies, and then of sending his First and Third Armies forward to clear the way, as well as to mask the shrewder blow, which was to follow, of the Fourth Army.

Shortly after five o'clock of the morning of the 27th the First and Third British Armies in co-operation seconded the bombardment by an attack on either side of Cambrai on a 13-mile front, from Souchy Lestree

on the north of it to Gouzeaucourt on the south. The Canadians, the 17th, the 6th, and the 4th Corps, were employed. Success depended on the ability of the troops streaming forward from the half-way house of Mœuvres to seize the crossings of the Canal du Nord opposite to them, for north of this the canal was too hard a nut to crack. If they could do this, as they did, they would be able, even if their foothold over the canal was only a narrow one, to spread fanwise to the north and get behind the backs of the Germans who held it. Everything worked to a miracle. The dangerous manœuvre came off, and thenceforth the infantry, over the whole 13 miles of attack, went on behind some sixty-five Tanks to break deeply into the enemy's position. In a sense it was plain sailing, but it is not to be supposed that the best troops in the world could take a position of this importance without having to fight for it. The Germans resisted fiercely on their right, for that was the position where the key was kept for opening the door lower down to the Fourth Army. They counter-attacked here with pertinacity all day, especially at Beaucamp, Ribecourt, and the old battle-ground of the Flesquières Ridge, famous since the first battle of Cambrai. But the 5th and 42nd Divisions established themselves, despite all resistance, between Beaucourt and Ribecourt, and the 3rd Division took Ribecourt itself and Flesquières, crossing the canal to do so, in face of all the machine-guns and the field-pieces that the Germans

brought up to their front lines. Moving forward with the 3rd Division went the Guards (Major-General T. G. Matheson), and they took Orival Wood and reached Premy Chapel, where they passed on the work to the 2nd Division (Major-General C. E. Pereira).

the canal, between Mœuvres and Sains-les-Marquion. In the half-light of dawn these divisions went storming over the canal and did not stop till they were on to Graincourt, Anneux, Bourlon, and those slopes of Bourlon which till this day had marked (in the first battle of Cam-



British Official Photograph

The Cambrai Advance in September, 1918: British Tanks get into the Canal du Nord

In the centre the 57th Division had previously furnished the bridge-heads over the canal; and making use of these the 52nd Division passed its troops across, went straight into the German trench lines on the opposite bank, and carried the high ground overlooking Graincourt. Higher up, the 63rd Division, the 4th Canadians (Major-General Watson), and the 1st Canadians (Major-General A. C. MacDonell), had moved down while it was yet dark to the nearer bank of

brai) the "farthest east" of a British advance.

As soon as the line of the canal was thus made safe the engineers got to work, throwing over bridges in a fury of speed which scarcely noted the shells of the German guns falling relentlessly on the registered range. This enabled reinforcements to come up rapidly; and they were needed, for, as usual, the German resistance stiffened as the discomfited first-line troops fell back on their reserves.

Graincourt was hard to take: it did not fall till late in the day, when the 63rd Division surrounded it. Meanwhile the 57th Division had passed through the other attackers to take their line on to Fontaine-notre-Dame. The 4th Canadian Division had made Bourlon secure, the 3rd Canadian Division (Major-General Loomis) had gone through and past Bourlon Wood—how the old names and sites of past conflicts were reappearing every hour! But new ones were being as rapidly added to the staff maps of position. On the inside left the 1st Canadian Division, having gained the necessary foothold at Sains-les-Marquion quite early, linked itself with the 11th Division (Major-General H. R. Davies) and took Haynecourt, leaving its colleagues to move forward thence to Epinoy and Oisy-le-Verger, north of Bourlon. Yet farther north on the extreme left the 56th Division crossed the canal, cleared the two Souchys, and spread itself north along the canal to Palluel on the River Sensée. The gap was widening; next day it deepened. South to north, Gouzeaucourt, Marcoing, Nouvelles sur l'Escaut, Fontaine-Notre-Dame, Sailly, and Palluel were taken; and at Marcoing, a key position, the Third Army's troops were over the Scheldt Canal. The two armies had taken 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns; they had simplified the momentous task of the Fourth Army.

While the First and Third British Armies were making plainer the way of the Fourth, the guns of General Rawlinson's artillery never ceased to thunder. The intensity of the fire

which was poured on to the German garrisons of the Hindenburg fortresses drove them deep into their tunnels, and cut them off from their daily supplies of food and ammunition. After two days of this treatment, General Rawlinson's army went over on a front of 12 miles, extending from Vendhuile, in the north, to Holnon Wood, in the south. The 3rd Corps, an American Corps (General G. W. Read commanding), the 2nd Corps, and the 9th Corps took the work in hand. These started just before six o'clock in the morning, but earlier than that the victorious Third British Army, just north of Vendhuile, had opened the ball by an attack extending from that place to Marcoing, and so had assisted in diverting the German attention from the main attack in order to react about these old familiar places, Villers-Guislain, Gonnelieu, and Welsh Ridge. Other assistance of a like kind was afforded by General Debeney, who, with the First French Army, began another attack south of Rawlinson on the St. Quentin sector.

The Fourth British Army had all its work cut out for it; but along the whole of its front its success was remarkable. One of the most characteristic episodes was the capture of Bellenglise by the 46th Division (Major-General G. F. Boyd). The village lies in the angle which the Scheldt Canal makes where it bends sharply to the east to burrow in the tunnel. The 46th Division stormed Bellenglise not only with rifles and grenades but with life-belts, for with these, and with improvised rafts, they

meant to take the western and northern arm of the canal. Some crossed the canal on footbridges at a pace which afforded the Germans no time to destroy them; others, dropping sheer down the steep sides of the canal into the water, swam it and

plete, was the organization of this attack, and so explosive was its suddenness that the 46th Division alone took 4000 prisoners and 70 guns.

South of Bellenglise the 1st Division (Major-General E. P. Strickland), with the 6th Division covering its flank, crossed the ridge north-west of Thorigny and reached the west end of the canal tunnel (Le Tronquoy). Here it linked up with the successors of the 46th Division, whose troops, resting on their gains, had allowed the 32nd Division to pass through them. The 32nd had done its bit by taking Lehan-court and Magny la Fosse. At Bellenglise and south of it the day had gone well for Britain. North of it the American Corps had one of those bitter tasks which, even in so limited a number of weeks of fighting, took such heavy toll of their keen and irrepressible soldiers. The 30th American Division (Major-General E. M. Lewis) had the least costly success; it broke through the deep defences of the Hindenburg Line in front of Bellicourt, stormed it, and seized Nauroy as well. But on their left the 27th American Division had a heartbreaking task in keeping up, for its troops found themselves enfiladed by machine-gun fire, and nothing but their gallantry took them on to Bony, where a ferocious struggle for the village crowned their day's work. At Bellicourt, at Nauroy, at Gillemont Farm, the 2nd American Corps had nothing without paying for it. The enemy, in the intricate recesses and convolutions of the Hindenburg Line, maintained a deadly resistance for hours. It was only by sacrifice,



British Official Photograph

The Scheldt Canal, where it was crossed by the 46th British Division in Lifebelts

scrambled up the other side, and fell into the German trenches—which they took. Having made a short section of them their own they swarmed down to the right behind the German defenders, still unaware that the Philistines were upon them. The eastern and southern arm of the canal and the high ground behind it were taken on their way. So thorough, so com-

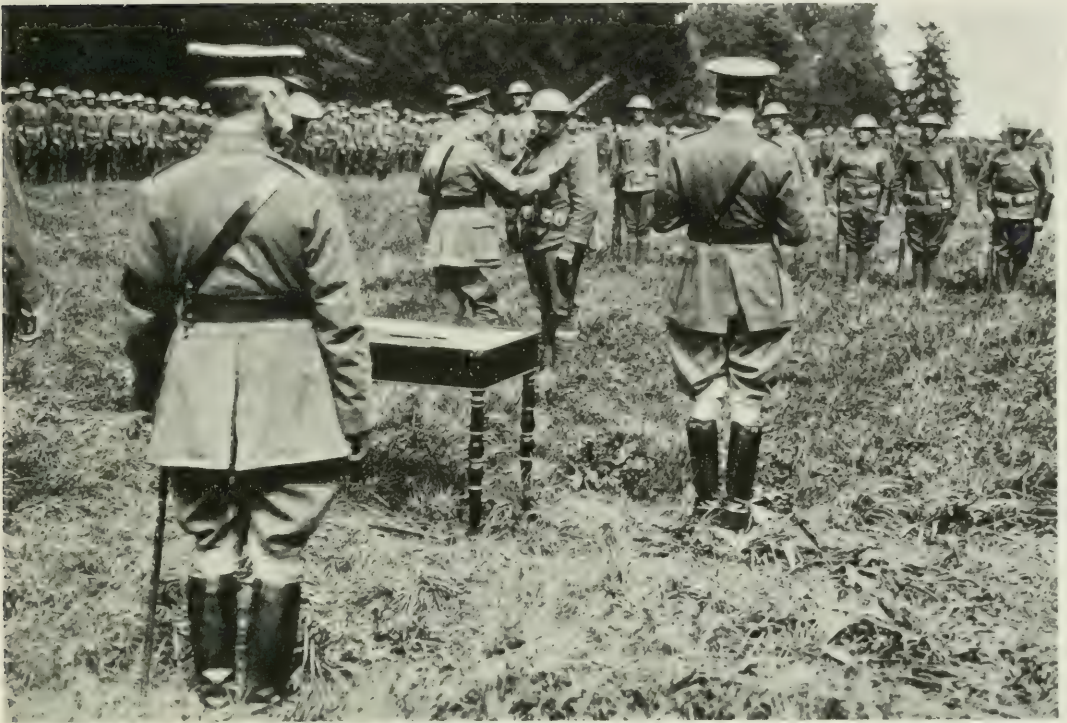
and by the determination that the nests of resistance should not defeat America, that they were at last reduced, but it took the support troops of the American division, as well as reinforcements from the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions (Major-Generals Sir J. J. T. Hobbs and J. Gellibrand) which came up close behind America, to round off the job completely. That will make a link not lightly to be severed between the two white nations of the Pacific.

North of this attack the British 12th and 18th Divisions cleared the slopes above Vendhuile; and meanwhile the Third Army, continuing its good work of the early morning—made a little easier by now—captured Masnières. That was a great point, for correlated with their capture was that of the crossings of the Scheldt Canal between Masnières and Cambrai—the first step towards encircling that town. The Canadian Corps did some corresponding work to the north of Cambrai.

This was not the end but the beginning. The crowbar had been dug in. The main Hindenburg Line had cracked, and the fissure was gaping. On the 30th the 1st and 32nd British Divisions took the Le Tronquoy tunnel, and the gap began to yawn wide and ever wider. The Germans dare not hold Gonnellieu or Villers Guislain: they abandoned them, and another stretch of the Scheldt Canal became British. On September 31 the 9th Corps and the Australian Corps joined with Debeney and the First French Army in an attack on either side of St. Quentin. St. Quentin fell. Levergier

was taken by the 32nd Division, still full of fight: the Australian troops who had helped out the Americans took Joncourt, Estrees, and Bony. Finally—for the attack never died down all along the front of the First, Third, and Fourth British Armies and the First French Army—the New Zealand and 3rd Divisions took Creve-cœur and Rumilly, thus creeping closer to Cambrai, while north of it the Canadian corps, who had as hard fighting as any troops engaged, cleared the high ground west of Ramillies and took Blecourt. It may be said that no section of the fighting-line won its gains lightly: the Germans were about to crack but they had not cracked yet, whatever the Hindenburg Line had done, and they still counter-attacked with skill and in numbers. The fighting continued during the whole first week in October.

The rounding-off of these operations, and their results, may be noted. On October 3 Rawlinson's troops, having broken the back of the Hindenburg Line, attacked again between Sequehart and Le Catelet; and it fell to the 50th Division to recapture Le Catelet, the streets of which had not seen a British soldier since the autumn of 1914, and Gouy. It was taken only after heavy and prolonged attack and counter-attack. Other villages, Montbrehain, and Beaurevoir, and the La Terriere plateau, which dominates a bend of the Scheldt Canal, were won after hard fighting. With the last-named capture the command of the Scheldt Canal passed into our hands, and the Germans had lost, in all reasonable probability, any hope of



British Official Photograph

Honouring our American Allies in the Great Advance: King George decorating American troops during one of His Majesty's visits to the Front

staying in the fortified line on which they had staked their reputation. In a nine days' battle their defence in the best and the last of their prepared positions had gone to pieces. The whole of the main system had been riven, and a wide gap had been opened up in those trench systems at the back. Thirty British and two American infantry divisions had worsted thirty-nine German divisions; had driven them out of the strongest positions ever fortified by military capacity; had despoiled them of 380 guns and

had taken 36,000 prisoners. The effect, moral and material, on the enemy was decisive. The threat to the German communications was now direct and instant, for nothing but the natural obstacles of open country lay between the British armies and Maubeuge; the threat to German confidence was more than a threat, for German confidence had now gone for ever. The shadow of defeat could be felt. It did not require the evidence of German prisoners to prove it.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER XII

THE DECISIVE BATTLES IN FLANDERS

(September–October, 1918)

Shortening of the German Line—Last Days round the Ypres Salient—King Albert's Day of Reckoning—His Majesty's Battle-call—Allies' Brilliant Advance—Belgian Drive through Houthulst Forest—Great Haul of Artillery—Fate of the "Dinant Butchers"—Plumer's March along the Menin Road—The Salient ceases to exist—Tributes to the Second British Army from King Albert and Sir Douglas Haig—Two Months' Captures on the Western Front—German Withdrawal in La Bassée Area—Lens and Armentières abandoned—Fruits of Germany's Economic Offensive—King Albert's Advance resumed—Fall of Roulers, Menin, and Wervicq—German Retreat all along the Line—Belgian Entry into Ostend—British Occupation of Douai and Lille—Historic Scenes in Lille—How Courtrai was liberated—The Enemy's Revenge—Fifth Army's Ceremonious Entry into Lille—State Entry into Bruges of King and Queen of the Belgians—Germany's Last Hope.

THE breaking of the Hindenburg Line, taken in conjunction with events which were happening in Flanders, constituted a new threat to the whole of the German positions on the Lys front. Here, as described on page 188, the enemy had been shortening his line ever since Foch's counter-stroke had robbed him of the initiative, discretion convincing him that since his projected offensive against the Channel ports must perforce be abandoned, the Lys salient was no longer worth the terrific cost of holding it under the constant fire of our guns. Before the end of August, 1918, he had given up Mer-ville, and was retiring on the northern face of the salient, as well as on the southern and western sides. Bailleul was found unoccupied on August 30, and by the evening of September 6 the whole of the Lys salient had disappeared. Kemmel Hill, the scene of some of the hardest fighting of the war, was relinquished without a struggle, and our troops had reached the general line Givenchy - Neuve

Chapelle - Nieppe - Ploegsteert - Voor-
mezelle.

Here and there the German rear-guards offered stubborn resistance to our advance where we hurried on their heels, notably about Neuve-Eglise and Hill 63, captured with a number of prisoners by the 36th and 29th Divisions. But for the most part their rapid withdrawal was not seriously interfered with. With his heavy commitments elsewhere Sir Douglas Haig contented himself with occasional blows where an opportunity offered of inflicting serious damage on the retreating foe. The main Allied offensive on this sector could afford to wait until the advance of the other British troops towards the vital railway centres about Maubeuge began seriously to threaten the communications of Prince Rupprecht's group of armies in the north. The amazing course of events since the sudden collapse of Ludendorff's progress had deprived Flanders of its old position as the chief magnet of British offensive plans, and, though it was destined

shortly to witness a triumphant revival of activity, it never again quite recovered its former importance in the war.

The German days round the historic salient of Ypres were obviously drawing to a close. They were definitely numbered at a conference held by Marshal Foch at Cassel on September 9, a week after the Canadian and Home divisions of the First British Army had stormed the Drocourt-Quéant line. It was there decided that the new battle of Flanders should begin on September 28 and that all the troops engaged should be placed under the supreme command of the King of the Belgians, who had waited so long for this opportunity of again marching against the ruthless invaders of his kingdom. Marshal Foch's plan was that some French divisions, and a certain number of divisions of the Second British Army, commanded by General Plumer, should form part of the striking force, and "to the definite plan thus laid down", records Sir Douglas Haig, "I gladly gave my consent".

King Albert and his reorganized army had waited for this chance ever since the fall of Antwerp in the autumn of 1914, when the Belgians made their heroic stand to cover our 7th Division in its desperate movement to join up with the British army about Ypres, and helped to save the Yser front in the first German plunge towards the coast. This front they had held tenaciously for four long years, often fretting at their enforced inaction as the battle swayed backwards and forwards on their right,

and more than once begging for a share in that epic struggle round Ypres. Hitherto, however, their only chance had been in their limited co-operation with the French on the British left in the closing stages of the bloody struggle for the Passchendaele slopes in the previous autumn, when King Albert's troops captured the Merckem peninsula. Now they were attacking in full force in a large-scale operation, under the chief command of their own sovereign, and those who saw them advance described their dash and fighting spirit as simply magnificent. They were thrilled by King Albert's stirring battle-call, issued in a special Order of the Day just before they were launched to the attack.

"Soldiers!" he cried. "Advance and deliver your most powerful assault on the enemy's positions by the side of your heroic British and French comrades. Your duty is to drive back the invader who has been suppressing your brethren for the past four years. The hour is decisive. Everywhere the Germans are retiring. Soldiers! prove yourselves worthy of the sacred cause of independence, worthy of our traditions, worthy of our race. Forward for right and freedom, and for glorious and immortal Belgium!"

The advance was a brilliant success on all parts of the line. On the British side the main attack was delivered at 5.30 a.m. on a front of some $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the Ypres-Zonnebeke road, by the 19th and 2nd Corps of Plumer's Second Army. It was a horribly damp and misty morning, and, as there was no preliminary bombardment in this sector, the disconsolate Germans, apparently taken very much

by surprise, were in no mood for the fierce encounters which had drenched these villainous swamps with blood in the dreadful battles of the past. A captured Order, issued on the previous day by the Chief of Staff of one of the German armies, throws some light on the enemy's broken spirit.

advance on the left of the Second British Army as far as Dixmude, prepared the way by a violent bombardment lasting some hours, the Germans having accumulated vast quantities of wire defences on this sector of the front during the four preceding years. British warships at the same time bombarded the coast defences of the



Preparing the Way for King Albert's Advance: Belgian pioneers at work among the swamps and barbed-wire entanglements along the Flanders front

"Holding positions lightly", it ran, "leads to failure and the discouragement of troops, and this feeling grows as the thinness of our garrison increases. Unfortunately, in addition, the *moral* of our men has decreased considerably"

On the new battle-front the enemy was attempting to hold his positions with less than five divisions, and under the weight and fury of the Allied assault his defence simply melted away. The Belgians, who continued the line of

enemy and vulnerable parts of his communications. Royal Air Force contingents co-operated with the navy, successfully "spotting" for British monitors, and doing immense damage with their low-flying machines among enemy trains and concentrations behind the German lines. A sudden and violent rainstorm which burst in the early hours of the morning, and made the heavy going for the Allied infantry more difficult than

ever, accounted for the majority of our casualties that day in the air, thirteen of our machines failing to return.

Once the Belgian infantry were unleashed there was no holding them, notwithstanding that the floods and swamps of the sea marshes were so deep in places that many could only advance waist-high. Along other parts deep lagoons made it impossible to attack save at selected points where the ground was in any way practicable, and had the German guns been as well served as in the past, the slaughter among the dense columns of troops at these places would have been appalling. Luckily for our Allies, the opportunity was missed; the Belgians were swarming over the first hostile line before the enemy had time to act. In spite of a number of vain counter-attacks, especially about the railway at Staden, King Albert's men drove straight through Houthulst Forest, capturing nearly the whole of it—a zone, powerfully fortified, which had defied the Allied attacks in the previous autumn—and carried all the ground extending up to a line limited by Woumen, Pierkenshoek, Schaap Baillie, and Broodseinde. South of Woumen, at the Château of Blankaart, occurred one of the finest exploits of the Belgian army. The château was one of the few strongholds stubbornly defended by the Germans to the last; the officers of the company which took it were all killed in the assault.

A great haul of artillery was made among the numerous batteries concentrated by the enemy in and about

Houthulst Forest. Scarcely a German gun had been got away; the mud had seen to that, even if the enemy had displayed any serious anxiety to remove his batteries. Not only had the guns been left—including a long 11½-inch monster on rails, as well as whole batteries of 12-inch howitzers and 5.9's with a range of more than 12 miles—but also an abundant supply of ammunition; and it was not long before Belgian gunners were hard at work pounding the retreating troops from their own abandoned weapons.

Many wrongs were avenged on this memorable Saturday of September 28, 1918, by troops who had waited for years for this day of reckoning. It chanced that part of the enemy's front facing the Belgians was held by the 100th Regiment of Saxons, which had earned execrable notoriety for its share in the outrages at Dinant in the early days of the war, when the town was ruthlessly destroyed and many of its inhabitants—men, women, and children—murdered in cold blood. There was a grim hunt that morning for the "Dinant Butchers", and not many of them survived. "The numerous dead lying on the battle-field", as the official Belgian *communiqué* ran that night, "bear witness to the losses suffered by the Germans". Some 4000 prisoners were also brought in before nightfall by King Albert's men, who were supported on their left by the French troops, and whose own losses were not a quarter those of the enemy's dead.

On their right the British troops, consisting of the 14th Division

(Major-General P. C. B. Skinner), 35th Division (Major-General A. H. Marindin, and the 29th and 9th Divisions, who delivered the initial assault, and supported in the later stages of the battle by the 41st Division (Major-General Sir S. T. B. Lawford) and the 36th Division (Major-General C. Coffin), had swept up all the old battle-ground along the Menin road, and, passing far beyond the farthest limits of the 1917 battles, had reached and captured Kortèwilde, Zandvoorde, Krui-seecke, and Becelaere. It is related of one British general, who had won the V.C. and many other honours in the course of the war, that he found a German pony during the march along the Menin road, and, like the London brigade-major at Croiselles, just before the storming of the Drocourt-Quéant line, rode unmolested in advance of his men down the main street of Gheluvelt—the scene of epic fighting in the First Battle of Ypres, and the limit of our advance in the battles of 1917, when every approach to the place was swept by shells and machine-gun fire, and the only troops who succeeded in entering it were obliged to withdraw.

The day closed with the Allies in possession of practically the whole of the high ground east of Ypres, so fiercely contested through all the months from June to November of the previous year. South of the main attack other British divisions had in the meanwhile been delivering subsidiary attacks with equally startling results. The troops concerned were the 31st Division, 30th Division

(Major-General W. de L. Williams), and the 34th Division, who carried our line forward as far as the outskirts of Messines. There was a good deal of sharp fighting in this sector, but it ended with the capture of Wytschaete and the conquest of all the dominating ridge between that place and the canal north of Hollebeke.

Even to-day one's pen can hardly keep pace with the rapid march of events which was thus reducing the German armies in Flanders to the same desperate straits as their neighbours in the south. At the time, to those anxiously waiting at home, it was like a return to the great days of 1757, when Horace Walpole could say that "one had to be very careful o' mornings lest one missed a British victory". The next day on the Flanders fields (Sunday, September 29) drove home the victories of the opening assault, though the pitiless downpour of rain and the scarcity of practicable roads through the wilderness of shell-holes and slush made the advance unspeakably trying and exhausting. Vying with each other in cheerful courage, however, the Allies followed up the retreating foe with amazing vigour, the *liaison* between the British and Belgian troops being described as perfect throughout. King Albert's men and the Scottish troops who linked them up on the left of Plumer's army never lost touch for a moment. They captured Moorslede as their joint objective on September 29, the Scotsmen sweeping up from the south and meeting the Belgians as they swung round it from the north, afterwards sharing in the house-



The Liberation of the Belgian Coast, 1918: map showing approximately the Allies' line on September 28—represented by the solid line—and on October 25—represented by the broken line—when the King and Queen of the Belgians made their state entry into Bruges

to-house fighting which continued until the place was thoroughly cleared up.

In the forlorn hope of stemming the flowing tide, the enemy now brought up all the reserves he could muster and violently counter-attacked the Belgian troops to the north of the village of Houthulst. This attack was completely broken up, and further progress made all along the line. Passchendaele and Stadenberg were both carried that day on the Flanders ridges, while on their left, supported by the French forces, the Belgians also captured Zarren, on the road between Staden and Dixmude. Dixmude, the scene of some of the stiffest fighting that had occurred on the Belgian front throughout the years of trench warfare, was taken on the same day, the town being first encircled by the advancing troops, and its capture completed by hand-to-hand fighting in the town hall. At the end of the second day of King Albert's offensive, the Belgians, who, besides the advances already mentioned, had now crossed the Menin-Roulers road and reached the approaches to Roulers itself, had counted over 5500 prisoners in their "cages", and captured upwards of 100 guns.

Further progress was made on this and the succeeding days by the British troops on the right and south of the Allied line. From Armentières northwards, English, Scottish, and Irish troops together swung round the Messines ridge, driving the Germans once more, and finally both from Messines itself and Ploegsteert Wood of evil memory, besides capturing Terhand and Dadizele. That was on September 29.

By the evening of October 1, on which date the Belgians had passed well beyond the German line Moorslede-Staden-Dixmude, Plumer's army had entirely cleared the left bank of the Lys from Comines southwards, while north of that town his troops were close up to Wervicq, Gheluwe, and Legeghem. Both Gheluwe and Legeghem fell within the next few days. Overcoming powerful counter-attacks in the Gheluwe region, Plumer was now seriously threatening Menin, which Marlborough, and, in more recent years, General French, had regarded as the master-key to Lille. In these operations and their subsequent developments General Plumer had, at inconsiderable cost, captured over 5000 prisoners and 100 guns. In reply to Sir Douglas Haig's congratulations, King Albert took the opportunity of expressing his pride in having under his command, "in such a successful operation, some of the fine troops of your Second Army, which is second to none".

To this may be added Sir Douglas Haig's special tribute to the 9th, 29th, and 35th Divisions for their distinguished services throughout these eventful days, when "in most unfavourable conditions of weather, they advanced to a depth of over 9 miles across extremely difficult country, clearing the whole of the ridge east and south-east of Ypres". It was the 9th—the famous division of Scots and South Africans which had been fighting almost continuously since the dark days of March 21—which had taken Becelaere, 5 miles east of its starting-point, on the first day of the attack.

Three days later it had reached Ledeghem, on the railway from Roulers to Menin. Similarly, on the first day, the 29th Division, which, like its comrades of the 9th, had earned special mention for its heroic share in some of the earlier fighting of 1918, had passed beyond Gheluvelt and captured Kruiseecke, having advanced 5 miles along the Menin road. "On its right", added Sir Douglas Haig in the special *communiqué* recording the prominent part played by these British troops in the Flanders advance, "the 35th Division also passed far beyond our old positions of 1917 and took Zandvoorde".

These achievements in the closing days of September, 1918, had completed a truly memorable month in the annals of the British army. All told, the British forces alone on the Western Front had captured 66,300 prisoners, including 15,000 officers, together with some 700 guns of all calibres, and thousands of machine-guns. Counting August as well, the total captures by the British amounted to no fewer than 123,618 prisoners, including 2783 officers, and about 1400 guns. More remarkable still were the following official figures, issued by the French authorities:—

"The booty captured by the Allied armies operating in France and in Belgium from September 1 to 30 amounts to 2844 officers and 120,192 men, 1600 guns, and more than 10,000 machine-guns. The total booty taken by the Allied armies from July 15 to September 30 amounts to: Officers, 5518; men, 248,494; guns, 3669; machine-guns, 23,000; and several hundreds of mine-throwers."

The logical development of our

VOL. VIII.

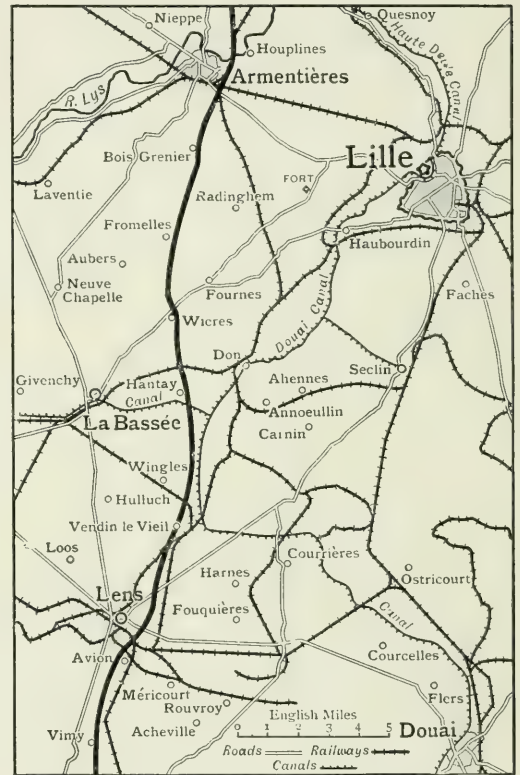
sweeping advances, both on the Flanders and the Cambrai fronts, was soon apparent on both sides of La Bassée. As early as the beginning of September the enemy had withdrawn from his outpost positions astride the La Bassée Canal, where, following hard on the enemy's heels, and after sharp fighting, the 16th Division (Major-General A. B. Ritchie), 55th Division (Major-General Sir H. S. Jeudwine), and the 19th Division carried our line close up to the outskirts of La Bassée itself. Thenceforward there had been little change on this part of the front until September 30, when the divisions of General Birdwood's Fifth Army made a number of small advances south of the Lys. Early on October 2, however, the enemy began another extensive withdrawal on a wide front south and north of the La Bassée Canal, falling back from the whole line south of Lens to Armentières, thus evacuating highly-organized positions which he had held since the beginning of trench warfare, and hitherto defended with the utmost resolution. He was followed up closely by our eager troops, who, getting into touch with his rear-guards, inflicted heavy casualties upon them, and took numerous prisoners. On the following morning (October 3) Armentières was re-occupied, and Lens, at long last, cleared of the enemy, our advance detachments reaching the general line Avion - Vendin-le-Vieil - Hantay - Wicres - Herlies, and east of Bois Grenier. South of Lens the patrols of the 20th Division (Major-General G. G. S. Carey) were faced with stouter resist-

ance about Acheville and Mericourt, but here too progress was made.

Notwithstanding many vast craters made in the roads to impede our progress, with barbed-wire entanglements and fiendish booby-traps of every description, our troops pushed steadily forward throughout the ensuing days in this area of the enemy's withdrawal north of the Scarpe, pressing vigorously all the time on his hurrying heels. The whole retreat had been prepared with the systematic destruction peculiar to German frightfulness. Every house, every building, ancient or modern, had been blown up if it seemed likely to be of the least use to the pursuers for purposes of observation.

Prussian unscrupulousness was seen at its worst, however, in the ruin wrought among the coal-pits of Lens and the factories of Armentières. Before the war, Lens rather prided itself on being as near to a garden city as a mining-town could ever hope to be. Unlike the unlovely mining-towns of our own Black Country, Lens was picturesque as well as prosperous, every miner living in his own house, surrounded by a garden. When the Germans left it the whole place was an abomination of desolation. It was part of their deliberate economic offensive thus to cripple the French coal industry, so that German trade might hold this advantage over France for many years after the war. Not only were all the approaches to the pits obliterated by the creation of numerous craters, but the mine galleries themselves were deliberately flooded, and the working plant, with winding-

gear and ventilating appliances, destroyed. Much of the damage here was irreparable, as well as in the town itself, where the main streets were blown up and houses burned and pillaged on every hand; but in due course Germany was made to pay the



The British Line east of Lens and Armentières,
October 3, 1918

penalty—as far as it was possible to punish her on this account—in the terms of the Peace Treaty, by which the Saar valley, with its productive German coal mines, was made to furnish compensation to France until her own mines had once more become productive.

Armentières, the centre of the French textile industry, had suffered

in similar fashion. The cloth and linen factories of the once prosperous town had been callously destroyed for the benefit of German competitors in Hesse and Westphalia, the local machinery even from the workers' homes being sent into the Fatherland to further this end. It was the same at Cambrai, captured a week later, as well as at many other places won back for France in these great days of 1918. Pitiful tales were told in certain villages of millions of francs worth of embroidery machines—the only means of livelihood possessed by the people whose property they had been—smashed to atoms by the Germans before their flight.

The recapture of Armentières deprived the enemy of his last remaining foothold in advance of his lines of the previous winter. Free at length of all the hideous traces of stationary warfare, the Allies were now advancing over practically open country, with autumn tints touching a landscape practically unravaged by the war, until the Germans, now retreating without making an attempt to hold their ground, left the villages in flames behind them, with dummy men here and there in abandoned trenches, placed conspicuously over the parapets in the hope of deceiving the oncoming troops, and so delaying their advance. The Germans had been forced thus to speed their retreat as a result of Sir Douglas Haig's victorious march towards the vital centre of communication about Maubeuge. Our progress in that direction was now threatening to close the main avenues of escape in the south for their forces opposite the

French and American armies, and seriously endangering the positions of all their troops on their right flank in Flanders.

Here King Albert's Allied forces, after driving forward over the old Ypres battle-fields with the dramatic results already described, had perforce to wait for something approaching an adequate system of communications over the muddy slopes and shell-torn wilderness before resuming their advance. Towards the middle of October, however, by dint of untiring exertions and careful organization of traffic routes, sufficient communications were re established for completing the liberation of the Belgian coastal area. King Albert's Government, which had been for some weeks considering with the Allied Governments what measures should be taken with regard to the systematic brutality and destruction practised by the enemy in the territory he was forced to evacuate, now issued the following official note on the subject:—

"Since the beginning of the war the Belgians have been exposed to the ravages of the German army. At this moment, when the new German Chancellor (Prince Max) is proclaiming his desire for the happiness of all peoples, and his determination to work for the deliverance of humanity, the Belgian Government have received fresh news of the excesses of the German army in Belgium. From the coast to Bruges all male civilians from fifteen to forty-five are dragged from their homes and brutally forced to perform military work. The whole world will cry for vengeance if the German army in leaving Belgian soil is allowed to renew with redoubled cruelty the excesses of the invasion, and if it consummates the ruin of

the country by pillage, fire, and deportation of the population *en masse*.

This was an additional incentive to the attacking troops of the Allied armies under the command of the King of the Belgians when the advance was resumed on October 14. The front now extended over a wide arc of 28 miles, from Dixmude in the north, to Wervicq in the south. As in the previous operations, British monitors off the coast assisted materially with their powerful guns, while British, Belgian, and French airmen again played a great part in the battle, bombing enemy concentrations on the move, and machine-gunning German infantry wherever possible.

The Fourth German Army, holding this front, had been expecting the attack for days past as the inevitable sequel to the previous advance, and were ready for it both with guns and infantry. General Einem, indeed, had put all the strength he could muster into his first lines on this occasion in the hope of breaking the impact of the Allied blow. The British sector extended for a distance of between 9 and 10 miles, from Comines, south-east of Menin, to the hamlet of St. Pieter, where it linked up with the Belgians on the Menin-Roulers road.

The land ahead was new to our troops, a wide strip of low-lying French soil dotted with concrete pill-boxes, as well as with ruined villages and hamlets of red brick and thatch, all long since placed by the enemy in a formidable state of defence. The only places of importance until Cour-

trai was reached were the canal-side centres of Wervicq and Menin. To the south-east lay Tourcoing, while away to the north, Roulers, the largest town on the present battle-front, stood ready to fall into the hands of the French, who were operating in this direction with the Belgians on either flank. The attack was delivered all along the line at 5.35 a.m., in the mists of an autumn dawn, and following a terrific bombardment. It was launched on the British front by the 10th Corps, under Lieutenant-General R. B. Stevens, employing the 30th and 34th Divisions; the 19th Corps, under Lieutenant-General Sir E. E. Watts, employing the 41st and 35th Divisions; and the 2nd Corps, under Lieutenant-General Sir C. W. Jacob, with the 36th, 29th, and 9th Divisions, the whole, of course, forming part of General Plumer's Second Army.

The Germans, who, as already mentioned, had been anticipating this resumption of the offensive any morning since King Albert's first assault died down, had, according to their wont, been shelling our lines heavily before dawn—long before our men went over behind the protecting barrage of high-explosive from their own guns. Sweeping every obstacle from their path, however, their attack went forward like clockwork. Notwithstanding stubborn resistance, the two southern British corps advanced their line according to programme to the southern edge of the rising ground overlooking Wervicq, Menin, and Welveghen. The 2nd Corps, meanwhile, was also heavily engaged, and, penetrating to a depth of between

3 and 4 miles eastwards, captured Moorsele, and pushed beyond it to within a short distance of Gulleghe and Steembeek. Before the end of the day between 2000 and 3000 prisoners, as well as a number of guns, had also fallen into British hands. On their left the Belgian troops, fighting on a depth of over 10 kilometres, carried Iseghem, reached the outskirts of Lendelede, where a numerous civil population waited with feverish impatience to welcome their soldier compatriots, and liberated Winkel St. Eloi and seven or eight other villages.

Immense quantities of material, as well as nearly 6000 prisoners, that day fell to the Belgians and their French comrades, who shared the total almost equally between them. Many guns were also captured, including six complete batteries all limbered up with their teams as they were about to withdraw. Roulers had fallen towards the middle of the day to the French, who, after encircling the town, carried it by assault.

On the 15th, King Albert's group of armies carried the advance over another carefully-planned stage, the French and Belgians pushing nearer to Thourout on the road to Bruges, and the British thrusting closer to Courtrai and Comines. Von Einem's army, with its main lines of communication with the Lisle salient cut, and its escape eastward being steadily narrowed, was obviously in so serious a predicament that it must now let go its hold on the Belgian coast or perish. It was the need of stopping the Allied advance at all hazards that

led the Fourth German Army Commander to mass his remaining batteries of artillery in forward zones at the imminent risk of their falling into the hands of his pursuers. Some of his gunners, to their credit be it recorded, remained firing in the open at point-blank range, standing their ground to the last. At other places they were captured just as they were preparing to gallop away. The six batteries taken by the Belgians in this way on the previous day have already been mentioned. At a farm near Moorsele, British infantry charged a battery of 5.9 howitzers and captured it complete, with officers and gun crews unhurt. At another place a group of 6-inch heavies was taken intact, even to the sights.

So unequal was the fighting that at one place near Wervicq one body of our men, not much more than 400 strong, and with but 16 casualties, captured over 300 prisoners, including 9 officers. Much of the fiercest resistance came from the air, where German aeroplanes joined in the fray with intense activity. They were heavily engaged by Allied squadrons, over thirty of their machines being destroyed in the opening day alone of the resumed advance, and six driven down out of control. Eleven of our own machines were missing at the end of same day. On the next day the weather was less favourable, and there were fewer battles in the air, but our own squadrons continued their activity throughout, maintaining close co-operation with our infantry and artillery, harassing the enemy's troops and transports by machine-gun fire, and

dropping the usual daily load of bombs on railways and centres of hostile activity.

The number of prisoners and captured guns mounted up steadily every hour. By the end of the 15th, King Albert's group of armies had counted between them a round 12,000, in officers and men. At one place the staff of a regiment was captured by the Belgian troops. The total of 12,000 was roughly divided under three different flags—British, Belgian, and French. On the following day Sir Douglas Haig was able to report that, in addition to over 4000 prisoners, upwards of 150 guns had already been taken by our Second Army, and many civilians freed from the enemy's rule. The well-trying 9th Division of Scottish and South Africans, forming part of the Command of General Jacob's 2nd Corps, again received special mention on this occasion for having fought throughout with great distinction. "Valuable and gallant services had also been rendered," it was added, "by the 29th, 35th, 36th, and 41st Divisions, as well as by the other divisions engaged."

Vigorously exploiting every success, the British troops, by the afternoon of October 16, held the north bank of the Lys as far as a point opposite Harlebeke, and had crossed the river at a number of points. Menin and Wervicq had both been occupied on the previous day. Splendid progress had also been made by the French and Belgian divisions to the north, where, before nightfall on the 15th, Thourout had been surrounded. Next day the enemy was everywhere in full

retreat. It was a case of escaping now or never along the narrowing corridor between the coast and the interior. Farther south the British advance towards Courtrai—we were right up to the outskirts of the town on the morning of the 15th—had already created a similarly dangerous trap for the Germans in the deepening salient including Lille and its neighbouring manufacturing towns of Tourcoing and Roubaix. Farther south still, Douai was in similar straits now that Cambrai on one side had fallen, for on the other side British troops were completing its encirclement at Flers.

From one end of the German line to the other, in fact, the German armies were now hurrying back as hard as they could go. It was a landslide, as one correspondent put it, of all their ambitions and military power. Now that they knew they were beaten—that none of the promises of their War Lords could ever be realized—the disillusioned soldiers were crying for peace. "The Kaiser must go", their prisoners said: "and as for the Crown Prince," they added in reply to further questions, "he does not count." It was not only among the prisoners that these things were said, and this spirit was manifested. The Kaiser himself had noticed the change in the demeanour of his troops as he had passed among them at the beginning of these inglorious days.

"His Majesty," ran a deeply significant order from his Adjutant-General, captured by our troops about this time, "observes with displeasure that when he passes through villages and along roads, railway

crossings, &c., troops fail to pay him proper respect, while inhabitants fail to greet him in the necessary way by removing their head-gear. This must be seen to."

It was seen to, but how differently from the manner anticipated by the Kaiser and his Adjutant-General very few people at that time imagined. Meanwhile, events were marching with unheard-of swiftness on the battle-front. The flowing tide on

ster. In the French zone Wyngheue and other places had been captured. Farther south the Second British Army had occupied the line of the Lys north of Courtrai, while south of that town British troops had crossed the river and reached the outskirts of Tourcoing.

All these startling events, coupled with the continued progress of the Allied attacks south of the Sensée



Wrecked by the Germans in their Retreat from Lille: one of the road bridges over the railway

the seaward flank continued to make irresistible headway on October 17. From Lombartzyde, which had been held by the Germans since they snatched it from our grasp before our costly offensive in Flanders in the previous year, as far as Ostend, the Belgian coast had now been cleared of the enemy. By the evening of the 17th King Albert's advance had been carried forward to a depth of 20 kilometres over a front of more than 50 kilometres. The Belgian army had entered Ostend, and its cavalry was at the gates of Bruges. Belgian cavalry had also occupied Ingelmun-

(described in Chapter XV), forced the enemy to hasten his retreat from the salient of Douai and Lille. On this red-letter day of October 17, 1918, while the Belgian army was entering Ostend¹ in triumph, the troops of General Horne's First British Army were occupying Douai—this honour falling to the 8th Division of General Sir A. Hunter-Weston's 8th Corps—after breaking the enemy's rear-guards on the Haute Deule Canal; while the Fifth British Army, under General

¹ Ostend was practically redeemed on the 16th, when British warships landed men, the first ashore being Admiral Sir Rodger Keyes.

Birdwood, having pressed the Germans back with ceaseless activity and determination for many weeks past, was crowning its efforts by capturing the city of Lille, the particular troops concerned being the 57th and 59th Divisions (Major-General N. M. Smyth) of Lieutenant-General Sir R. C. B. Haking's 11th Corps.

The liberation of Lille after its four years' agony of German rule was the supreme achievement of a most wonderful day. Happily the town itself was outwardly undamaged. The Germans had done their best—or worst—to draw our artillery by firing on Birdwood's advancing troops from batteries of 8-inch howitzers, established in Park Vauban within its borders. General Birdwood, however, was determined to save the city from damage, and succeeded by careful strategy in encircling it, thus forcing its evacuation without a fight. Though the Germans had refrained from damaging the town in their hurried flight, robbery and brutality had characterized the German occupation practically from the beginning. Nothing, however, had burned itself so deeply into the minds of the inhabitants as the wholesale annexation of women and girls, as well as men, during the black Eastertide of 1916, when no fewer than 50,000 people of both sexes from Lille and its surroundings were torn from their homes and sent into Germany—in too many cases to an unknown fate.

The day of delivery was marked by many extraordinary scenes and incidents. While the Liverpools, who were the first of our troops to enter from the direction of Armentières, were

marching into the outskirts, a French airman landed in the town in his machine. He was the son of the mayor, Monsieur Delesalle, who came to congratulate his father on his delivery, and, having done so, flew away again. By midday, the Mayor had issued a type-written proclamation to the people.

"Dear fellow citizens," it ran, "the long nightmare has at length vanished. Lille is liberated, and we can at length freely give vent to the cry which we have had for so long to stifle within our lips: 'Vive la France!' . . . Our sole thought now must be," concludes this moving document, "to show by every means in our power our gratitude to the splendid soldiers who have delivered our soil from the enemy, and are now marching from one success to another to final victory."

The German troops who had been in possession of Lille to the last, belonged to General von Bernhardt's division, and they were given no time by General Birdwood either to complete the removal of their stores or destroy the bridges and roads behind them. While they were fleeing towards Tournai on the 18th our line was carried far to the east of the town which they had just abandoned, as well as east of Douai. Similar progress was made on the same day east of the twin towns of Roubaix and Tourcoing—occupied by Major-General Sir W. W. Feyton's 40th Division, and the heroic 51st Division of Highlanders.

This advance also completed the liberation of Courtrai, the northern portion of which had been redeemed, with nearly 5000 civilians, by the 41st Division after its rapid advance from Menin, when it had first pushed down

to the Lys between that town and the Wolveghen. The remaining two-thirds of Courtrai, separated from the northern portion by the Lys Canal, had continued for nearly another week in the hands of the enemy. Here, too, remained the bulk of the population—some 30,000 or so altogether—who were thus reduced to a plight almost without parallel in the war. Huddled in their crowded cellars, their quarters shared by the German troops—who knew that the houses were thus safe from our gun-fire—they had waited with feverish anxiety for their prolonged ordeal to cease. By the canal side, where a screen of German machine-guns kept up an almost continuous fire, they were only separated from the Middlesex and Queen's Regiments of the 41st Division by a narrow strip of water. Since their part of the town could only be stormed at deadly peril to themselves, there was nothing for it but to wait until the advance of our troops farther south forced the enemy to withdraw.

Meantime the opposing infantry fired at one another intermittently from the houses on opposite sides of the canal, varying the duel with occasional bombardments of strong points by trench-mortars. When at length the Germans were driven back by our progress from the south, and some of our patrols crossed the canal into the heart of the town, the joy of the inhabitants knew no bounds. The *Morning Post* correspondent describes how the patrols found themselves overwhelmed by the liberated Belgians:

"People came up from their noisome cellars crying that the Boche had gone.

They swarmed through the streets, littered with broken glass, and hung about the necks of the embarrassed soldiers. Men of the Surrey and Kent battalions were among the recipients of this ovation, which brought them to the Town Hall, and then in a noisy triumphal procession they marched from one end of Courtrai to the other."

Unhappily their joy was short-lived. With malignant deliberation the retreating Germans now began to shell the beautiful old city which they had been forced to evacuate. That useless shelling continued for days with varying intensity, without the slightest regard for the safety of the women and children who formed the bulk of the remaining population, and long after our troops had swept past the town on both sides. It was a farewell in keeping with the reign of terror of the last four years, during the whole of which the people of Courtrai had been systematically robbed of their valuables and food, and deprived of their means of livelihood by the destruction of their industrial machinery.

Prisoners and guns were captured in ever-increasing numbers as the Allied troops pressed steadily forward on the tracks of the retreating foe, whose rear-guards were frequently driven back in disorder. On the left flank of the Second Army one British corps alone, on October 21, captured 20 guns, including a long naval gun, as well as two metre-gauge railway trains, and much miscellaneous booty.¹ By the evening of the 22nd our patrols

¹ In the operations from the resumption of the Flanders Offensive on October 14 until the end of the month the British troops on this battle-front accounted for over 6000 prisoners and no fewer than 210 guns.

had reached the general line of the Scheldt on the whole front from Valenciennes to the neighbourhood of Avelghem. Deprived of their lateral communications through Roulers, Douai, and Cambrai, the Germans were now in danger of losing their vital railway centres at Valenciennes—the western suburbs of which had already been entered on the morning of the 22nd by troops of General Horne's First British Army—and at Tournai, the outskirts of which were seized at the same time by the vanguard of Birdwood's Fifth Army, which had pushed on past Lille on both sides without waiting for a formal entry into the city itself.

Lille, however, was not to be denied its day of ceremonious rejoicing. On the 28th, during a comparative lull on

the British front, the Grande Place of the ancient city was the scene of a spectacle as memorable as any of its historic pageants of the past. Like the rest of the town on this occasion the Grande Place was richly decorated with flags, and every window and balcony was thronged with citizens assembled to do honour to the victorious troops for whom the day had been set apart. With General Birdwood and his generals and staffs mounted on horseback at their head, the regiments of the Fifth Army now entered the city in triumph. They were accompanied by an escort of low-flying aeroplanes, and marched, with bands at the head of each battalion, to the square in which the Mayor of Lille and the City Fathers, in their black coats and tall hats, waited to exchange flags with



British Official Photograph

The Liberation of Lille: the Fifth British Army's triumphal entry into the city on October 22, 1918



British Official Photograph

Lille's Gift to its British Liberator: General Birdwood with the city flag presented to him by the mayor in exchange for the flag of the Fifth British Army

the "Soul of Anzac", who now commanded the Fifth British Army. On entering the Grande Place the generals and staff-officers dismounted, and General Birdwood, advancing on foot with the flag of the Fifth Army, presented it to the mayor with a brief speech in French, expressing his own gladness, and that of his troops, at the freeing of the city from the Germans, as well as admiration for the courage of its citizens throughout their long years of trial.

Then came the presentation of the flag as a souvenir of the army which had liberated the city, followed by its exchange for the flag of Lille, around which the civic councillors had grouped themselves before handing it, with

moving words of thanksgiving and gratitude, into General Birdwood's keeping. The ceremony closed with the march past of the troops, the regimental bands playing old English marching tunes until the statue of Liberty was reached in the centre of the square, where the exchange of flags had just taken place. Then, suddenly, the bands struck up the "Marseillaise":

"It was as though some electric spark had fired the crowd," wrote Mr. Philip Gibbs, who was present. "They rose and cheered louder than before, with a shrill fervour, and then thousands of voices took up the old hymn, which once sang of revolt, and now sings of liberty and the love of France, and its music passed down the streets with a passion in it. The soldiers

had flags in their belts, and rifles and flowers on their guns and wagons. For nearly two hours they passed and passed, riflemen and gunners and Red Cross men and Red Cross ambulances, engineers and signallers and cyclists, field-batteries and howitzers, brigade by brigade, and it was good to see those men who have fought in many battles under the fire of the homage of the people they had helped to save."

Three days previously (October 25) the King and Queen of the Belgians—after a preliminary visit by aeroplane—made their state entry into Bruges. By this time the whole Belgian coast had been cleared of the enemy, the northern flank of the Allied line having swept past the abandoned German submarine base at Zeebrugge and reached the Dutch frontier by the 20th. The last Germans to leave Ostend cleared out on the morning of the 17th, when Lille was evacuated. But the port was still within range of the German guns when the King and Queen of the Belgians, with Sir Roger Keyes, landed from a British destroyer to receive the indescribable welcome of the thousands of inhabitants who were waiting on the sea-front to greet their chivalric sovereign and his queen. Ostend, though roughly handled by the Germans, and knocked about by British bombs and shells in the area of the station, harbour, and docks, was not otherwise seriously damaged. The big hotels and the great Kursaal were still standing. Before leaving the town the Germans, who had latterly lived in daily fear of a British landing—temporarily fleeing from the town. indeed, on October 14, when they

firmly believed that the resumption of King Albert's offensive was to be accompanied by a grand attack from the sea—had sunk a mail steamer and two other vessels in order to complete the blocking of the fairway so gallantly begun by the *Vindictive*, whose war-worn wreck, though the Germans had succeeded in slewing her round, still lay aslant the Mole. There was yet room, however, for small craft to pass in and out.

When King Albert made his state entry into Bruges on October 25, the Queen rode on his left, and the young Prince Leopold—in the uniform of his regiment of Carabineers—on his right. Common suffering had united the Belgian royal family with their different subjects in a manner little anticipated by the Germans, who, in their affected sympathy with the Flemings, and other clumsy intrigues, had done their utmost during their years of occupation to sow disruption among the people. The loyal enthusiasm of Ostend and Bruges showed how closely the people had become consolidated in their mutual attachment to their King. Though the inhabitants of Bruges, like those of most towns in the enemy's occupation, had suffered sorely under the iron tyranny of the invaders, and had been systematically robbed of their machinery and resources, their beautiful city itself, with its old-world buildings and other architectural treasures, had been spared the outrages perpetrated on many another historic place. The belfry chimes were able to ring out a triumphant carillon as the royal cavalcade entered the Grande Place, where long banners

floated from all the houses, and tens of thousands of joyous people only waited for their opportunity, after the King had reviewed his troops in the square, to break all bounds and surge round him in a tumultuous crowd of devoted, cheering subjects. No need now, with their sovereign in their

present desperate positions to shorter lines, and so protract the struggle until winter gave her time to breathe again and reorganize her forces. She had already sought to involve the Allies in a discussion of peace terms on the basis of President Wilson's Message to Congress, hoping thus to



British Official Photograph

King Albert's State Entry into Bruges: His Majesty—in the centre, with the Queen on his left and the young Prince Leopold on his right—reviewing his troops as they marched through the square on October 25, 1918

midst, to fear any return of Prussian rule.

The spirit of the German army, as well as of the German nation, was rapidly breaking under the cumulative effect of the succession of Allied blows, as well as by the surrender of Bulgaria and the impending capitulation of Turkey—shortly to be followed by the collapse of Austria-Hungary. Germany's only remaining hope now was to withdraw her armies from their

sow dissension among them. Had she succeeded in withdrawing safely she might have succeeded by this means in prolonging the war, possibly in securing a patched-up peace which would not be altogether disastrous to Hohenzollern hopes and plans. How Sir Douglas Haig prevented this withdrawal, and thus forced an immediate conclusion, is related in Chapter XV.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER XIII

ITALY'S TRIUMPH

(October–November, 1918)

The Position of General Diaz after the Austrian Failure on the Montello—The Plans for the Attack at the End of October—The Earl of Cavan and the Tenth Army—Feint Attack in the Monte Grappa Sector—Main Assault on the Piave—Seizure of the Piave Islands at the Grave di Papadopoli—Work of the Honourable Artillery Company and Welsh Fusiliers—The Crossing—Task of the Eighth and Twelfth Armies, and the Support offered by the Tenth—Renewal of the Attack—Duc d'Aosta and the Third Army—The Piave Line won—Pursuit to the Monticano—Renewed Attack in the Mountains—Collapse of the Austrian Resistance—Cavalry converting the Austrian Retreat into a Rout—The Austrian Surrender—General Diaz and the Summary of the Results of Victory—The British 48th Division.

WHEN Ludendorff's hope, that the failure looming before the German armies might be redeemed by an Austro-Hungarian success, perished in the Montello bend of the Piave, it was supposed that General Diaz might, by exploiting the Italian victory, have given the decisive blow to the shaking Hapsburg power. That, however, was impossible for two reasons, one military and one political. The military reason was that the Austro-Hungarian leaders still commanded sixty divisions on the Italian front, and over a long part of that front were advantageously placed. The political reason, less certain, was that although the Pact of Rome, to which Signor Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, had given his adherence, had reconciled the Jugo-Slavs and Czecho-Slovaks, who formed an unwilling part of the Austro-Hungarian forces, to Italian aims, yet the reconciliation was not complete, as was afterwards shown in the discussions at the Peace Conference. Consequently, while the loyalty of the artillery in the Austro-Hungarian army was sound, discipline was maintained and no

break-away of Jugo-Slavs, or any general surrender of Czecho-Slovaks was to be expected. The *moral* of the armies opposing the Italians was not to be trusted, but it had not altogether collapsed—that phenomenon was witnessed in only one army during the war, namely the Bolshevised Russian.

In face of this military and political situation, General Diaz had no other course save that of holding fast. He had only a few French or British divisions, though these, when put to the test, showed themselves capable of pulling more than their weight in the boat, and—in a phrase which the Italians coined—there was “no American uncle”, meaning that the American reinforcements which came to Europe did not pursue their voyage to Italy. Consequently, General Diaz marked time, waiting for the disintegration which had set in among the enemy forces to complete its work. During the summer of 1918 disintegration was certainly in operation; mutinies among disaffected Czechs and Slovaks were frequent, and their attitude was so distrustful that they were forbidden to sing their national songs while in the

line, lest by so doing they should convey information of their whereabouts to the Italians. A number of the disaffected units in the reserves actually broke away and sustained themselves as best they could in the mountains. There was another reason for the inaction of General Diaz. As late as September, 1918, it seemed so much more desirable that General Foch should have as many men as could be marshalled for the purpose of hitting the chief enemy, Germany, where the blow would be most felt, namely, in France, that it was proposed to remove the British divisions in Italy to the Western Front. General Diaz was in entire sympathy with the idea, loyally recognizing that the principle of unity of command demanded sacrifices of its units. He assured General the Earl of Cavan, the British commander, when the suggestion was brought before him, that his one wish was to assist General Foch in defeating the Germans with all the resources he had available, and agreed to a transfer of the British units, which, however, was, fortunately as things turned out, whittled down to a reduction of them. The British 7th, 23rd, and 48th Divisions were, as a preliminary, each reduced from thirteen to ten battalions, and the nine battalions thus released were dispatched to France on September 13 and 14. The 7th Division as a whole, and after it the 23rd Division, were earmarked to follow, a proposal which held the field till the end of September, and was only not carried out because the demands on the railways made its execution difficult. At this moment

the situation changed. General Foch, though he would probably have welcomed the reinforcements, found that the scale was swinging in his favour without them, and that the prospects of a great Italian success had so far brightened in Italy that the divisions would be better employed in turning the scale there.

Before the end of the first week in October General Diaz had readjusted his outlook and formulated his plans, in which a distinguished position was to be taken by the three British divisions under the Earl of Cavan, who was offered the command of a mixed Italian-British army, to be called the Tenth. The plan for the offensive was outlined by General Diaz at a conference of army commanders at the Head-quarters of the Supreme Command on October 13. The plan was for the main attack to advance across the Piave with the Tenth, Eighth, and Twelfth Italian Armies, thereafter driving a wedge between the Fifth and Sixth Austrian Armies. The Fifth Austrian Army was to be thrust back eastwards, and the wedge would also threaten the communications of the Sixth Austrian Army running through the Valmarino valley. At the same time the Fourth Italian Army was to take the offensive in the old northern battle-ground of the Grappa sector, where for so long the contending armies had held one another at grips. General Diaz, in a dispatch, speaks of the attack in the Grappa region as a demonstrative action of great energy—to hold the enemy's numerous forces in line, and to attract the reserves there which

were known to be in the Feltre basin in large numbers, ready to hurry either to the mountain front or to that of the plains through the cross-road Feltre-Ponte delle Alpi-Vittorio.

It was all that and more. The action was preceded and accompanied by flights of aeroplanes operating in successive squadrons, which bombarded enemy hutments, parks, and depots, and bombed and dispersed columns of troops in the Sugana valley, Cismon valley, and the Arten basin. In the night following the first day's attack, on October 24, a ton and a half of explosives was dropped on the railway lines behind the enemy by Italian airships. The fighting began at dawn, and the Italian assault was immediately successful in penetrating into the Austrian lines in the north-western region of the Monte Grappa *massif*. Demonstrations of greater or less intensity spread to the Asiago plateau.

The Austrians, as it was intended they should, reacted vigorously, and their counter-attacks, which had lacked direction on the Thursday, were renewed with organized fierceness on Friday morning. The struggle to evict the Italians went on with varying fortunes all day. The Italian Fourth Army, having been committed to a demonstration, were bent on converting it into a solid victory and were not to be moved.

Meanwhile the main battle had begun on the Piave, which in a night and a day was converted by the combined attack of British and Italian forces from a defensive and militarily passive line into one of the most

dangerous offensive. The method by which General Diaz proposed to effect this conversion has already been indicated; it may now be more clearly outlined. The Piave had first to be crossed—no easy task, for its width on the front of his attack was approximately one and a half miles, and this one and a half miles was dotted with islands like huge stepping-stones with the river flowing swiftly between them. The main island was the Grave di Papadopoli, which was some three miles long and a mile broad. This was held by the enemy as an advanced post. The current between the island stepping-stones varied according to the channels; in the main one it never dropped much below 4 miles an hour, even when the stream was low in summer drought; a flood brought it up to 11 miles an hour, and a flood christened the very hour of the attempt which the Tenth (Anglo-Italian) Army under Cavan, was to make.

In the plan of General Diaz the action of the Tenth, Eighth, and Twelfth Italian Armies was co-ordinated under the general control of General Cavaglia, the commander of the Eighth Italian Army; and the Tenth Army under Cavan, consisting of the 14th British Corps and 11th Italian, was, having crossed the Piave, to push on to the Livenza between Portobuffole and Sacile, and then protect the flank of the Eighth and Twelfth Armies as they swung northwards. Of the forces of the army under the Earl of Cavan, the 11th Italian Corps was already in position, holding a fairly long stretch of river

from Ponte di Piave to Pallazon; the 14th British Corps was concentrated at Treviso, in the third week of the month, and on the 21st took over the northern portion of their colleagues' lines from Salluetol to Pallazon. It was imperatively necessary that the enemy should not know of this strengthening of the front, or suspect what its meaning was; and consequently orders were issued that all British troops visible to the enemy should wear Italian uniform, and that no British gun should fire a shot previous to the general bombardment.

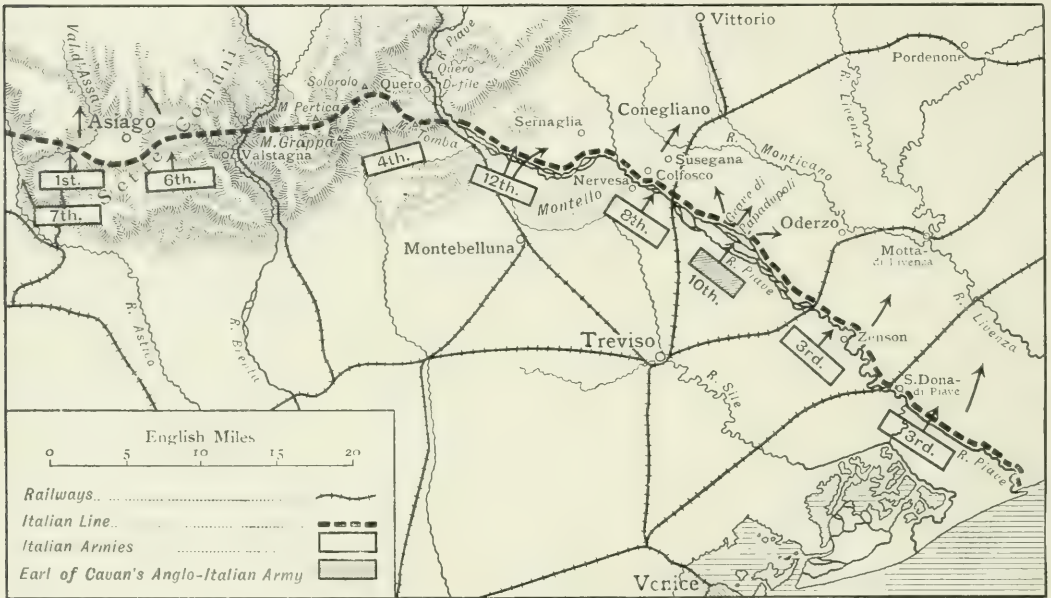
The flood on the Piave was a most unwelcome addition to the problem which the Allies had to solve. It was met by the adoption of a suggestion which was made in the first place by Lieutenant-General Sir J. M. Babington (commanding the 14th Corps), and which was that the big island, the Grave di Papadopoli, should be rushed by surprise before the general advance began. Consequently, on the night of October 23-24, the 2/1st Battalion of the Honourable Artillery Company and the 1st Battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, without any previous artillery preparation, crossed the main channel, surprised the Austrian garrison, and occupied the northern half of the island. This feat was one which reflected the highest credit, first of all on the soldiers who undertook this perilous operation under conditions and at an hour which required all that "two o'clock in the morning courage" which the Duke of Wellington declared to be the rarest, as well as the highest form of bravery. They

were led with undaunted skill and coolness by Lieutenant-Colonel R. N. O'Connor, D.S.O., commanding the H.A.C. battalion. But all this skill and courage would have been thrown away without the co-operation of the staff of the 7th Division (Major-General T. H. Shoubridge), and the untiring energy of Captain Odini, of the Italian Engineers, who directed the Italian engineer boatmen, or *pontiere*, who got the troops across. The men were taken over the channel in flat-bottomed boats, holding six apiece, and each rowed by two Italian *pontiere* who knew all the treacherous and dangerous currents of the river. The share of the *pontiere* in the operations did not end there, for they subsequently turned their hands to their more common occupation of bridging the channel by pontoons, &c., and in this way furnished help the value of which it was impossible to over-estimate. The surprise was so complete that part of the Austrian garrison were caught asleep, and the Welshmen were well entrenched before the enemy on the opposite bank were alive to the situation.

This was the first step; the real attack held its fire till the situation on the Grappa front should have developed and the Austrians should be fully committed to it. Another day went by while the garrison of the island was subjected to a heavy shelling, which, indeed, continued for forty-eight hours, and after the conquest of the Grave di Papadopoli had been completed by a combined movement of the 7th British Division from the north and of the 37th Italian Division

from the south, who between them swept away the remnants of the Austrian garrison. This very successful operation put the main channel of the Piave behind the Tenth Army and enabled them to get over bridging materials and to begin their preparations for the attack on a wide front

roar which drowned the Austrian fire. The British guns joined in it, and joined it for the first time, for, in obedience to plan, no British gun had been fired before that moment. Both heavy and field artillery took their ranges from the instructions of the 6th Field Survey Company R.E.,



Italy's Triumph: map showing the disposition of the Italian and Allied armies at the beginning and continuance of the attack on October 24 and following days

The first attack was made by the Fourth Army in the Grappa sector. The Sixth, First, and Seventh Armies entered the battle after the main action had been decided by the Tenth, Eighth, and Twelfth Armies on the Piave; and were followed by the Third Army on the Lower Piave.

in much better conditions. In "comparative security" was the Earl of Cavan's phrase in his dispatch, but the Austrian artillery, which had its ranges all well registered, made the task of sticking on, while waiting for the main attack to begin, a trying one. At last, half an hour before midnight on the night of October 26, the heavy bombardment which was to prepare the attack for the passage of General Cavaglia's three armies began with a

firing, in short, "by the map", and the fact that the bombardment, and the barrage which followed it, were in every way satisfactory, and produced "no complaints" except from the enemy is a testimony to the Royal Engineers' work. The bombardment went on for more than seven hours, and at a quarter to seven in the morning the Earl of Cavan loosed his troops out of the din and sent his men of the Tenth

Army through the waters towards the enemy.

At the same time the Twelfth and the Eighth Italian Armies went through the river to storm the enemy's line to the south of the Quero defile. They encountered the same ill-fortune, of a river swollen to a torrent by the rain, that faced the Tenth Army, and their first parties had only just crossed the Piave when the bridges were whirled away by the fury of the current, or broken to pieces by the enemy artillery. Nevertheless, the first rush of the heads of columns carried them victoriously into the first lines of enemy trenches. But the Austrians, greatly outnumbering the attackers, were by no means done with; they maintained a stubborn defence, and for twenty-four hours the storming columns of the Twelfth and Eighth Armies, which had passed to the eastern bank of the Piave, could be supported only by trickles of men, and by supplies actually carried by aeroplanes, while the Engineers worked in a fury of energy to replace the bridges which from time to time collapsed. The Italian leading columns of these two armies had, in short, to fight isolated actions with uncertain communications behind them. It was not till the bridges had been repaired, and the torrent had a little subsided, on the night of October 28-29, that the development of the Diaz wedge could be carried out.

It had, however, been driven in at another point. While the Twelfth Army and part of the Eighth Army were storming the Austrian defences south of the Quero defile, and were

clinging tooth and nail to their holding on the Val Dobbadiene in the Sernaglia plain and on the heights of Col Fosco, the Italian Tenth Army helped by the right wing of the Eighth Army (18th Army Corps) had effected the break-through on which in its initial phase the whole manœuvre planned by General Diaz was poised. The push from the jumping-off place on the Grave di Papadopoli Island on the enemy defences east of the Piave began at a quarter to seven in the morning of October 27. The right or southern wing of the attack consisted of the two Italian divisions of the 11th Italian Corps (General Paolini). The two divisions were the 23rd Bersaglieri (General Fara), extreme right, and the 37th Division (General Castagnola), keeping touch with the British on the left. The 14th British Corps had, in touch with the Italians, the 7th Division (Major-General T. H. Shoubridge) and the 23rd Division (Major-General H. F. Thuiller) on its left to the north. When the time came for the attack the Honourable Artillery Company and the Welsh showed great courage in crossing and in beating off counter-attacks, though the first of these came within ten minutes of their getting ashore. Later, they gave place to other regiments many of whose names are familiar—Northumberland Fusiliers, and Yorkshire and Lancashire and Durham Light Infantry, Queens, South Staffshires, Manchesters, Borderers, men of Devon, and Gordons, as ever, in the first line. Our men had 800 yards to wade, swim, and trudge before they got under the shelter of their own barrage.

The divisions had to go through the Piave, still running in flood, in order to get at the enemy, and many brave men, weighted with rifles and ammunition, were swept away by the current. But along the whole front, sometimes wading breast-high, stumbling over stones and through holes, the assaulting troops reached the opposite bank and went straight on to the Austrian trenches. The Austrian front line, comfortably entrenched with machine-guns in position, could afford to resist, and resist some of their units did desperately; but the attackers, having to choose between the enemy and the deep river, were in no mood to turn back, and the Austrian front lines were overwhelmed and taken. Before night fell on a day of preliminary loss and subsequent triumph the troops of the Tenth Army had established themselves and ringed themselves round with a long and deep bridge-head east of the Piave, the extent of which may be gauged by the names of the villages in the Allies' hands—Stabiuzzo, S. Paolo di Piave, Borgo Zanetti, Tezze, Borgo Malanotti and C. Tonon. Behind the bridge-head the bridging of the Piave went on rapidly, though the task was one of great difficulty, for the Austrian airmen, whose opportunity came now or never, were active in bombing the bridges, in which if ever a break occurred the whole structure was swept away by the Piave flood. "Both bridges", observes Lord Cavan grimly in his dispatch, "were frequently broken."

Such difficulties were not less acute on the front of the Italian Eighth

Army. Their landing on the Piave's eastern bank had been made 7 miles to the north of the British bridge-head, and their struggle with collapsing bridges was making their holding extremely uncomfortable, if not precarious. This situation was especially awkward where the Tenth and Eighth Armies were in touch, and where no bridges could be maintained in the current. Consequently General Diaz sent down to Lord Cavan's front the Italian 18th Corps (General Basso) with instructions that the British Commander should pass it over his bridges, and then direct it northward so as to take the Austrians in front of the Eighth Army in the flank, and thus clear the Italians' front. During the following night (27th–28th), therefore, part of this corps, including units of the 56th Italian Division (General Vigliani) and the 33rd Italian Division (General Sanna), crossed the Piave by various bridges in the possession of the 14th British Corps and took over part of their front, from Borgo Malonotto to C. Tonon.

Not all the troops that were wanted were got over, for during the night many of the bridges were again sundered, and that the Italians got over in fighting trim at all is the highest testimony to the ardour and certainty of victory with which they were filled. But, despite all the trials of that testing night, those troops which were aligned on the morning of October 28 were ready to begin again at once, and though their numbers were barely sufficient for the task they had in view, their leader, General Basso, with the soldierly instinct, at

once set them at it. The advance along the whole front was resumed with splendid dash, and by dark the reinforced Tenth Army had reached the line Roncadelle-Ormele-Tempio-Rai - C. Bonotto - C. Milanese - Santo Lucia di Piave-Ponte-Priula. The patrols had been pushed well in advance of this line, and some had reached the River Monticano. The

quired of it under Cavan's leadership, reverted to the Italian Eighth Army again.

It is now possible to define what had happened, and what was next to happen. The thin edge of the wedge had been the British troops which had seized the Grave de Papadopoli; the chink had been widened and the wedge driven deeper and with a broader base by the combined Italian and British corps of the Tenth Army. It had been widened still further by the insertion of a parallel wedge in the form of the 18th Italian Corps, and had then at a bound doubled its width by the admission of the Eighth Army to a footing on the same side of the river as the Tenth Army. It had become a double wedge of two armies. General Diaz now drove this double wedge forward



Italian Official Photograph

An Italian Infantry Attack on a Mountain Summit

success of these operations had at once its effect on the Austrians holding up the Eighth Army; they became nervous of envelopment and began to let go their hold of the high ground about Susegana. The weakening was perceived and exploited by the Eighth Army, which brought its right wing over in the neighbourhood of Nervesa during the night (28th-29th), and next morning was in touch with the Tenth Army on the eastern side of the Piave. The Italian 18th Corps, having done all that was re-

quired with a view to separating the Austrian armies of the Piave from those of the Trentino.

On the morning of October 29 the attack was renewed along the whole of this widened front. During the day, the Austrians retreating nervously but still in order, the advance was continued as far as the River Monticano, of which a stretch was reached from Fontanelle to Ramiera. The mounted troops of the 14th Corps, seizing the opportunities which came so late, but not too late, to cavalry

in the war, were vigorously led by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir C. B. Lowther, and seized the bridge over the river between St. Vazzola and Cimetta. The Austrians had mined it, but the British cavalry were on to it before it could be destroyed, and so saved the hurrying infantry (not to speak of the Engineers) many hours of delay in the pursuit. For pursuit it was now becoming. The Austrian troops were no longer offering the kind of resistance to be expected of resolute rear-guards, and, far to the east, burning fires suggested that dumps and ammunition were being destroyed. Evidently no stand of any duration was contemplated. On this day, too, the manœuvre by which the 18th Italian Corps had widened the front was repeated in a southerly direction. The 23rd Bersaglieri Division of Cavan's army was lent to the Italian Third Army with a view to clearing their front to the southwards. Its place was taken by a new Italian division, the 10th (General Gagliani). At the same time the 14th British Corps received the reinforcement of the 31st Italian Division (General de Angelis), and among General de Angelis' troops was an American detachment, the 332nd American Regiment.

The enemy had hastily manned the defences, such as they were, of the River Monticano, and on this line he offered his last serious resistance. While the light was beginning to fail on the evening of the 29th, passages of the river were forced by the Anglo-Italian troops, and on the morning of the next day more and more ways of crossing were found. The enemy

was skilfully manœuvred out of most of his defences, and some of the neatest and most daring work at this point was accomplished by the 8th Battalion Yorkshire regiment.

When the Monticano line was gone the enemy gave up hope, and from that moment the organization of the Austrian resistance collapsed. The retreat became a rout. The advance of the Third Italian Army, with the Lower Piave left behind it (October 30), made the great gap wider and the enemy's position worse, and the magnitude of the Austrian defeat, it now became evident, would depend chiefly on the rapidity with which the victors could press after them. The Anglo-Italian advance-guards were on the River Livenza at Francenigo and Sacilè before the close of another day; the whole line of the river was in their hands by the next (31st), and it was crossed between Motta de Livenza and Sacile. The Italian Third Army was coming up to the river on that day as fast as the marching powers of its infantry would allow. The Italian 18th Corps, reverting once more to Cavan's command, made the spear-head stronger, and secured all the gains that had been won. The number of prisoners and guns was mounting up hour by hour.

The same tale of victorious and little-resisted advance was coming from every quarter. On the Grappa sector the Italian Fourth Army, finding the enemy weakening, converted what had in the beginning been a feint attack into an assault weighted with the utmost determination. The Austrian front collapsed

under it, and the Italians went forward as never before they had been able to go into the mountains. The Austrian troops met them more than half-way, not as fighters, but as prisoners. They came down the mountains in flocks. The reason was plain: their artillery had failed them. The whole of it in the Grappa section was captured. On the Fourth Army's left the enemy held out in their strong positions a little longer; but the Sixth Army began to find a crevice in their defences by way of the Brenta valley. Thenceforward, while the Austrians maintained for a day or so their resistance from the Stelvio to Astico, they began to waver on the Asiago plateau. On the rest of the front they were in full retreat everywhere, protected more by the broken and overcrowded roads and the other natural obstacles to pursuit than by any competent resistance of their rear-guards.

On the following day it was the Sixth Army's turn to test the defences which still held out on the extreme north-west of the battle-line. The Ancona brigade (60th and 70th Italian Regiments) led the way from the points of vantage reached in the Brenta valley and (November 1) extended active operations to the whole of the front. The Fourth Army cleared its front, and one of its brigades (Bologna brigade: 30th and 40th Regiments) entered Feltre. The Twelfth Army, still pushing on through the Quero defile, linked up the Fourth Army with the Eighth Army on the Piave line. Meanwhile, on the right hand of this hinge, the Anglo-Italian

Army under Cavan, and the Third Italian Army, were accelerating their advance. The Third Army's right wing, prolonged towards the coast by the Marine Regiment, occupied all the intricate coastal line, which the Austrians had endeavoured to make less accessible by flooding, as well as encumbering the roads and dykes with entanglements and barricades; and a patrol of sailors reached Caorle. The end was coming very near. Already the captured guns numbered more than 700.

Having got the enemy hopelessly on the run, General Diaz began now to throw his masses of manœuvre into the scale. The First Army was sent into action, captured Monte Majo, and took Monte Cimone with Tonezza plateau. Thence it went on up the Assa valley and occupied Lasselbasse. This assisted the Sixth Army, which now had little more than the task of accumulating guns and rounding up prisoners; and at the same time the Seventh Army entered into the struggle, breaking through the enemy's fortifications at the Sella del Tonale and pushing on through the Vermiglio valley to force the Vall Assa. It took the Col Santo to the north of Pasubio; and thus in a few days the situation was presented which had been the aim of the Italian commanders in the Trentino to achieve—namely, the prospect of outflanking the Austrian positions which guarded Trent and the approaches to the Trentino's railway communications.

Elsewhere the situation had entirely changed; the Austrian forces had relinquished the attempt to counter

the Italians, and at many points on the front all fighting had ceased. This aspect of the struggle was spreading from east to west, from the Livenza to the Piave, from the Piave to the Brenta, and from the Brenta to the Astico. The Austrian effort was largely confined to blowing up their artillery before abandoning it, and to setting fire to their munition depots and stores of provisions and material concentrated at the rear. Thanks to the very rapid advance of the Italian and British troops, and the fine work of the Italian cavalry, even this redemption was very inefficiently achieved, and most of the Austrian guns and material fell unharmed into the pursuers' hands. By November 3 Italian troops had occupied Trent and had also landed at Trieste. There they received a very warm welcome from the inhabitants. The Austrian fleet, it should be explained, had ceased to belong to Austria-Hungary before the last blows had been struck on land, for it had practically been handed over to the Jugo-Slav National Council, who otherwise would have taken it. Before this had taken place two Italian naval officers, Engineer-Commander Raffaele Rossetti and Surgeon-Lieutenant Raffaele Paroleci, had got inside the roadstead at Pola. With great daring, at a favourable moment towards dawn, they sank the flagship of the Austrian fleet, *Viribus Unitis*, a 20,000-ton Dreadnought of 1912.

The Tenth Army, like the other Allied armies, had little to do but to follow its compatriots on land. The Livenza had been bridged by the

Italian engineers, and the pursuit entrusted to the Italian cavalry; on the next day the whole army was on the move again, and by November 3 had reached the Tagliamento, where a year before a moment's breathing-space had been taken in the Italian retreat. There was no such opposition on the other side of the river such as the Italians had offered on its right bank, though on November 4 the 332nd American Regiment had its baptism of fire when forcing one of the passages. The Americans took over one hundred prisoners and suffered a few casualties when attacking the enemy rear-guards, an operation which they carried out with dash and spirit. But almost by the time the passage had been reached the rest of the Austrian forces no longer existed as an army in being. The Seventh and the First Italian Armies, moving easily from triumph to triumph, were descending the Riva basin; and on their way stamped out the dying embers of the Austrian resistance. By three o'clock in the afternoon of November 4, Austria-Hungary was out of the war. An armistice had been sought and had been granted. The last *communiqué* issued by General Diaz heralded the inevitable end. The war, he said, which had begun on May 24, 1915, and had continued for forty-one months, had been won.

The gigantic battle joined on October 24, in which 51 Italian divisions, 3 British divisions, 2 French divisions, 1 Czecho-Slovak division, and 1 American regiment participated against 63 Austro-Hungarian divisions was ended. The daring and

rapid advance of the 29th Army Corps on Trent, clearing up the way of the enemy armies in the Trentino, who were overcome in the west by the Seventh Army, and to the east by the First, Sixth, and Fourth Armies, precipitated and confirmed the collapse of the enemy's front there. From the Brenta to the Torre the Twelfth, Eighth, and Tenth Armies, had driven the enemy headlong in flight; and farther south the Duc d'Aosta, with that Third Army which had in former years won so many triumphs on the Carso, was on the way back to the ground where they had been gained.

"The Austro-Hungarian army", concluded General Diaz, "is destroyed. It suffered very heavy losses in the fierce resistance of the first days of the struggle and in the pursuit: it has left in our hands 300,000 prisoners with commands complete and not fewer than 5000 guns. Those left of that which was one of the most powerful armies in the world are in disorder and without hope, retiring along the valleys from which they descended with haughty assurance."

The share of the British divisions in this triumph has been indicated better in the description of the actions they fought than it can be in the summation of their captures. But the Earl of Cavan modestly computed the share of the 14th British Corps at

over 28,000 prisoners and 219 guns. He added a few details concerning the action of the 48th Division (Major-General Sir H. B. Walker) with the Italian Sixth Army. The captures of this division alone amounted to 20,000 prisoners and 500 guns, including the commander of the 3rd Austro-Hungarian Corps and three divisional commanders—a testimony to the wholesale surrender of the enemy in the closing stages of the operations. It must be remembered that this division was attacking very formidable mountain positions with only a fifth part of the artillery that it would have been given had the great attack been begun on the Trentino instead of in the plains on the Piave. The performance, therefore, in driving back the enemy's rear-guards while climbing heights of 5000 feet was all the more praiseworthy, and no unit distinguished itself more in the division, than the 143rd Infantry Brigade under Brigadier-General G. C. Sladen. In conclusion the Earl of Cavan paid the warmest tribute to the work of the 11th and 18th Italian Corps in *liaison* with him; to General Caviglia, commanding the army group, and to the Duc d'Aosta, and the Staff of the Third Army.

E. S. G.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEFEAT OF TURKEY

(March, 1917—October, 1918)

General Maude's Proclamation—British and Russian Troops join Forces—General Maude's Last Operations—The Battle of Ramadie—Death of General Maude—His Successor's Task—Threatening Situation in Persia—The Blockade of Nejed—Agricultural Developments in Mesopotamia—General Marshall's Advance beyond Hit—Results of Russia's Collapse—Germany's New Thrust towards India—Operations on the Persian Frontier—British Expedition to Baku—Failure of Local Support—Withdrawal of British Troops—New Campaign opens in Palestine—Preliminary Operations—Occupation of Jericho—Set-backs across the Jordan—Allenby's New Army—Triumph of its Opening Blow—Three Turkish Armies wiped out—Occupation of Haifa, Acre, and Nazareth—Arab Co-operation—Advance on Damascus—Capture of Beirut, Tripoli, and Aleppo—Muslimie Junction occupied on the Bagdad Railway—Turkey sues for an Armistice—General Marshall's Closing Operations in Mesopotamia—Allies' Victorious Terms.

TO follow the successive stages which led to the final collapse of Turkey it is necessary first to gather up the threads of the Mesopotamia campaign from the point at which we left them, after following Sir Stanley Maude to Bagdad (Vol. VII, Chapter IV), and connect them up with the story of Sir Edmund Allenby's equally triumphant progress in Palestine, which we have already carried to the liberation of Jerusalem (Vol. VIII, Chapter I). The fortunes of both campaigns were naturally bound up together from the first, and with Allenby's advance became so closely interdependent that we may now include them with advantage under one chapter heading.

Bagdad had been captured months before General Allenby, succeeding General Murray, turned the tables on the Turks in the Holy Land. In Bagdad and elsewhere General Maude revealed his real greatness by the use which he made of the victories which had thus restored our military prestige in the East. Mr. Lloyd

George afterwards said that he showed as much wisdom as an administrator as skill in generalship:

"Every great general has a strain of statesmanship, and Sir Stanley Maude showed great gifts of statesmanship in his administration of that difficult country. While ruling with a firm hand, he won the esteem and affection of that gifted but suspicious race, not merely by the equity of his rule but also by the intelligent sympathy which he displayed. He possessed the real tact which is a blend of gentleness and understanding."

By the end of March, 1917, Sir Stanley's victorious columns, following up the retreating Turks with all possible haste, had driven them in divergent directions, not only along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, but also along the Dialah—in the direction of the Russian troops under General Baratoff who were then advancing from the Persian frontier with the object of joining forces with the British. Bolshevism had not yet robbed us of the support of our Russian allies, who, when the Turks

beat a hurried retreat from the Persian borderland, as a result of our occupation of Kut, pursued them in all haste and captured Kermanshah on March 11, the day on which we entered Bagdad. By the end of March the Russian columns had already reached Karind, with advanced troops at Khanikin, and their pressure, assisted by Sir Stanley Maude's troops, who were now operating in the Jebel Hamrin hills, forced the enemy to cross the Dialah and continue his retreat on Kifri, a town on the great main route from Bagdad to Mozul and the Black Sea.

On April 2 a junction was effected with General Baratoff's troops at Kizil Robat, not far from the Persian border, which both Allies had been gradually approaching for some weeks previously. As soon, however, as the Russians were well established on the line of the Dialah the British troops operating in this region were withdrawn, having served the twofold purpose of harassing the retreat of the Turks and joining hands with the Cossacks. The withdrawal of the British column enabled Sir Stanley Maude to resume his operations along both banks of the Tigris and continue his plan for effecting the security of the whole of the Bagdad vilayet. This was largely effected in the course of the subsequent campaign between the Tigris, the Shatt-el-Adhaim, and the Dialah Rivers, in the course of which each of the two Turkish corps, the 13th and the 18th, were defeated three times in succession, and reduced to the defensive. The 13th Corps had been driven back into the

Jebel Hamrin, and the 18th Corps to Tekrit.

Our total captures in this busy month of April amounted to some 3000 prisoners and 17 guns, besides a considerable quantity of stores and booty of every description. All the objectives which Sir Stanley Maude had set out to reach had been secured, and the spirit of the enemy's troops crushed. The heat, the constant dust-storms, and the absence of water on occasions, had at the same time imposed a heavy strain upon Sir Stanley's own men, and tested their stamina severely. "But as conditions became more trying", he wrote in his last dispatch, dated October 15, 1917 "the spirit of the troops seemed to rise, and to the end of this period they maintained the same high standard of discipline, gallantry in action, and endurance, which had been so noticeable throughout the army during the operations which led up to the fall of Bagdad, and subsequently." He singled out, among other British and Indian troops which specially distinguished themselves in the course of these operations, the Black Watch and Seaforths, four Lancashire and two Welsh battalions, the Wiltshires, the Horse and Field Artillery batteries, the Buffs, Leicesters, Cheshires, South Wales Borderers, 8th Gurkhas, 28th and 92nd Punjabis, 51st Sikhs, and Indian cavalry corps.

With the end of April began the hottest season in Mesopotamia of which any record could be found. The heat was bad enough in July, but in August it became so intense that no military movements on any

considerable scale could be undertaken by either side without grave risk of incurring heavy casualties from sun-stroke and exhaustion. Throughout this period most of our troops enjoyed a well-earned respite from the continuous fighting in which they had been engaged during the previous five months.

During June the co-operation of the Russians, which at one time had promised such far-reaching results, began to fail, a communication being received from them early in that month to the effect that, owing to the increasing heat, they had found it necessary to evacuate the line of the Dialah River—positions which they had held without advancing since effecting a junction with our troops at the beginning of April. They now withdrew beyond Karind towards Kermanshah, a step which rendered necessary the occupation by our troops of Beled Ruz. This was carried out on June 23. The Russians continued to maintain observation posts among the frontier mountains of Persia until the beginning of July, but even these were then withdrawn under the pressure of the Turks, who were quick to seize their opportunity in this direction.

Taking advantage of Russia's growing passivity in the Middle East, the Turks and their German masters were now reorganizing their forces for a new offensive in Mesopotamia under the leadership of General von Falkenhayn, who was sent to Syria in the early autumn of 1917 to superintend the operations both on this front and in Palestine, where he

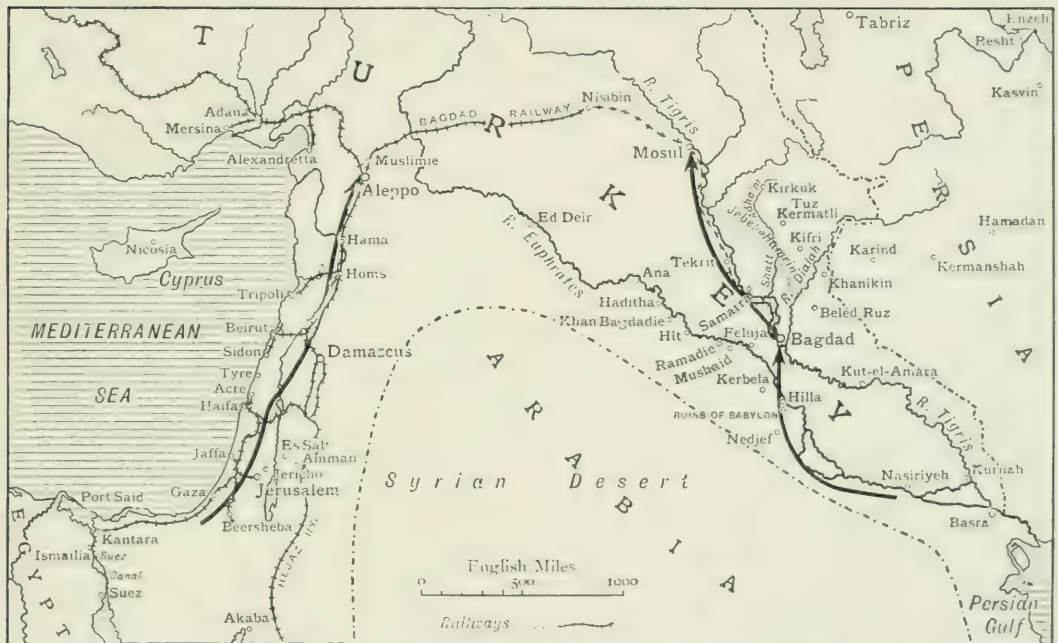
hoped that von Kressenstein would be able to bar the road to the British on the Gaza-Beersheba line while he prepared to deal with General Maude's army. Towards the end of September, however, General Maude put a very effective spoke in his opponent's wheel. This was at Ramadie, the enemy's advance base on the Euphrates, some 65 miles west of Bagdad. Here the garrison had been strongly reinforced since the failure of a preliminary British attack on that stronghold delivered on July 11, when a blinding dust-storm wrecked the plans for the final assault. This, and the beginning of an abnormal heat-wave, had rendered the position of our troops so difficult on that occasion that three days later they were withdrawn to their starting-point at Sinn El Zibban—some commanding ground on the right bank of the Euphrates, about 12 miles upstream from Feluja, dominating the left bank of that river at its junction with the Saklawie Canal—there to await the more favourable opportunity which they knew would come in due course.

Owing to the distance from Bagdad, and the bad state of the communications, it was not until September 26 that a force of adequate size could be concentrated within striking distance of Ramadie for the new attack. The main line of the enemy's semi-circular defence in front of Ramadie was covered by an advanced position 4 miles to the east on Mushaid ridge, running north and south, and rising some 60 feet above the plain. To the north of this fortified ridge lay

the Euphrates River, and to the south the salt Habbaniyeh Lake. The enemy's eastern front ran along, but behind, the Euphrates Valley Canal, and the southern front across bare, sandy downs.

General Maude's plan of operations was to turn the southern flank of the Mushaid ridge by a surprise attack,

expect the main attack against their left on the Euphrates. At 6 p.m. on September 27, however, two infantry columns, together with the cavalry, secretly moved from Madhij to the real position of assembly, some 5 miles in front of our outposts, the infantry subsequently making a night advance about 2 miles in a westerly direction



The Last Phase of the Campaign against the Turks: map showing the converging lines of the main British advances in Mesopotamia and Palestine at the points reached on October 31, 1918

and, securing a crossing over the Euphrates Valley Canal, strike Ramadie itself from the south with the bulk of his assaulting column; while the cavalry, operating west of the Aziziye Canal, threw themselves across the enemy's communications with Hit by blocking the Aleppo road. The distribution of the troops up to the last moment, and elaborate preparations for an advance along the left bank, induced the Turks to

to the appointed place of deployment whence the attack on Mushaid was to be delivered next day at dawn. An infantry detachment also skirted the northern edge of Lake Habbaniyeh, and before daybreak on the 28th had secured an important tactical feature on and behind the southern flank of the Mushaid position, including a dam across the Euphrates Valley Canal passable by all arms.

"The capture and holding of this ridge

by British and Indian infantry", wrote Mr. Edmund Candler, who accompanied the troops to Ramadie, "was a most gallant affair. This low pebbly rise is perfectly smooth, a long and gentle gradient barely 17 feet above the plain level. It offered no cover of any kind, and our infantry became visible to the Turks a full 200 yards before they reached the top of the rise. As soon as they came into view the enemy opened concentrated rifle and machine-gun fire on our front, and on our right flank, while their guns, which were perfectly registered, opened intense enfilade fire from the batteries on our left. The British and Indian soldiers hung on to their positions and dug themselves in."

This success compelled the enemy, who was completely taken by surprise, to retire from Mushaid ridge on his main position. At 7 a.m. the cavalry, screened from the Turks by the ridge just captured, were transferred from our right to our left bank, crossing the Euphrates Valley Canal by the dam, and, pushing westwards across the Aziziyeh Canal to a position astride the Aleppo road, cut off the enemy's retreat. Meantime, to the west of the Euphrates Valley Canal, our left infantry column advanced against the enemy's western front, and occupied and consolidated the position in spite of considerable opposition, the Dorsets and 5th Gurkhas specially distinguishing themselves. Under cover of the attack our right infantry column was withdrawn, and, pressing in rear of the left column, was subsequently launched to an assault which secured a firm footing on the Aziziyeh ridge. Thus, by nightfall, the enemy was completely cornered—hemmed in on the south by our infantry, and on the

west by the cavalry; while to the north ran the River Euphrates. Having neglected to provide bridges across the river, the Turks' only hope of escape lay in breaking out, an enterprise which they attempted at 3 a.m. on the 29th, making a determined effort to force a passage through our cavalry with the object of retreating by the Aleppo road. No avenue of escape, however, was allowed them. After an action lasting for an hour and a half they were driven back into Ramadie largely by the dash and gallantry of the Hussars and part of a regiment of Indian cavalry, who, with some Horse Artillery and Hotchkiss guns, were mainly instrumental in heading the enemy off.

At 6.15 a.m. our infantry attack was renewed from the south-east and south, successive positions along the Aziziyeh ridge being captured by our left infantry column. By 7.30 a.m. the 39th Garhwalis had seized the bridge where the Aleppo road crossed the canal, and captured three guns and many prisoners, while the 90th Punjabis, pushing eastward through Ramadie, had secured the Turkish commander, Ahmed Bey, at his headquarters near the eastern front of the position. Both these units were praised by Sir Stanley Maude for commendable dash and initiative.

Ahmed Bey, the Turkish commander, had been on the Euphrates all through the Mesopotamia campaign from the battle of Shaba in the spring of 1915, and throughout the summer and autumn of the following year had confronted us at Nasiriyeh. By 11 a.m. on September 29 he had

surrendered with the whole of his force, including between 3000 and 4000 officers and men, and numerous guns and machine-guns, besides two armed launches, two barges, large quantities of arms, ammunition, and equipment, and much miscellaneous booty. This brilliant victory on the Euphrates greatly strengthened our position at Bagdad, and was a fortunate beginning to the new campaigning season which, thanks to Russia's upheaval, had found our military situation both in Palestine and Mesopotamia considerably more delicate than it should have been.

In order to strengthen our position on the Dialah, operations were undertaken in October, and continued until early in December, by the Corps commanded by Lieutenant-General Sir W. R. Marshall—Sir Stanley's right-hand man, and his subsequent successor—by which we secured a firm foothold among the hills of the Jebel Hamrin ridge on both banks of the river. This was necessary in order that the control of the canals might be in our hands, and a perfect system of communication ensured in the new forward area.

While these operations were in progress, and the enemy dislodged from powerful positions with extraordinarily few casualties, the 18th Turkish Army Corps on the Tigris, which earlier in the year had been driven back to Tekrit, suddenly returned to the offensive, advancing in the middle of October as far as El Huweslat, 8 miles north of Samarra, where its troops proceeded to entrench themselves. General

Maude decided to attack before they had time to consolidate the position to any great extent. On October 24 his leading division on the Tigris front captured the Turkish advance position at El Huweslat after a night march. The Turks evacuated their front line in haste, and were pressed back to their second line of trenches at Daur. This position was carried on November 2 by the 28th Infantry Brigade, and the cavalry strove to complete the success by an attempt to press round the enemy's western flank. Here, however, they were met with heavy artillery-fire, under cover of which the Turks withdrew to Tekrit, about 30 miles upstream from Samarra. Although by this time our infantry had already marched the whole 30 miles upstream in twenty-four hours, it was decided to push on to Tekrit to reconnoitre this main position. Finding this lightly held, plans were immediately made for an attack, and on the 5th the 8th Infantry Brigade carried the place by assault, capturing the whole of their objectives, and repelling two counter-attacks in force.

The enemy suffered heavily in this encounter, and many prisoners were taken. In the meanwhile, the cavalry, supported by the 19th Infantry Brigade, had pushed round the flank, and in a combined attack flung the Turks back in disorder. The enemy fled panic-stricken to Shoreimiya under cover of strong rear-guard positions, which held up our pursuit. The Turkish losses were estimated at 2000, including 300 killed, and considerable booty fell into our hands. The

capture, at a moderate cost, of this powerful position, which was found to consist of an intricate system of deeply-dug trenches, with numerous machine-gun emplacements, reflected the greatest credit on all ranks. After clearing the battle-field and destroying the Turkish defences and depots, the main portion of our troops were then ordered back to Samarra.

This smashing blow completed the series of brilliant strokes by which General Maude entirely upset the enemy's preparations on each of his three possible lines of attack, and so greatly reduced the prospects of success of any future enemy offensive in this theatre. It was destined also to be the last operation of any importance before his untimely death on November 18. He died from cholera, and it was one of the ironies of fate, as well as a bitter blow to the whole of his force, that he of all men should have been singled out for a disease which had been kept at bay with remarkable success by the army under his command. It was only through visiting a plague-stricken area at the invitation of its inhabitants, who were anxious to give him a welcome for the many kindnesses which he had displayed towards them, that he contracted it. Mr. Lloyd George was subsequently able to tell the House of Commons how the General died a victim to the inbred courtesy of his fine character. The inhabitants of the village had given him a great welcome and offered him a small act of hospitality. Though he well knew the peril incurred, and had actually forbidden any soldier in

his escort to eat or drink while on that visit, he himself ran the risk rather than hurt the susceptibilities of a people thus anxious to do him honour.

"There was cholera in the cup, and he died in a few days. He will always be remembered," added the Prime Minister, "as one of the great figures of this war, not merely for what he achieved, but for what he was. I know not what destiny may have in store for the famed land which he conquered, but of two things I am certain. The first is, that the whole course of its history will be changed for the better as a result of the victory and the rule of Sir Stanley Maude; and the second is, that his name will always be cherished by the inhabitants of that land as that of the gentlest conqueror who ever entered the gates of Bagdad."

General Marshall proved himself no unworthy successor to his late chief, both as an administrator and as a man of action. He had been through much of the hardest fighting in the Mesopotamia campaign, and had earned repeated mention in General Maude's own dispatches. "Lieutenant-General W. R. Marshall, K.C.B.", he wrote on one occasion, "has commanded his troops with determination and judgment. His quiet, imperturbable manner, his coolness and decision, inspire confidence among his subordinates, while his bold methods and intelligent appreciation and rapid execution of orders have been of the greatest value." As soon as he received his new appointment General Marshall continued his predecessor's task of improving his communications and strengthening his flanks, while the Turks were still

demoralized by the succession of smashing blows by which they had been beaten back. For the time being the enemy was running no risks either on the Tigris or the Euphrates, where he had now retreated well out of rapid striking distance.

On the right flank, towards the Persian border, however, he was still holding strong positions, part of the Thirteenth Turkish Army being well placed for defence in this direction on the Dialah River, above Mansuriya, as well as among the passes over the Jebel Hamrin range and Kara Tepe. Towards the end of November, therefore, the new Commander-in-Chief determined to attack that part of the Turkish front, and operations with this end in view were entrusted to General Sir R. Egerton, an independent force of cavalry, under Major-General L. C. Jones, meantime demonstrating up the Adhaim River in order to prevent the dispatch of any strong reinforcements from that direction against our attacking force. Though heavily handicapped by the weather, as well as the flooding by the Turks of the whole of the low-lying ground on the right bank of the Dialah above its confluence with the Nahrin River, the operations were carried out with conspicuous success. The passage of the Dialah was forced by night, and the whole of the Turkish positions between Mirjana and the Nahrin River were occupied on December 3. Another of our infantry brigades carried the Sakaltutan Pass at the same time. The Turks fell back hurriedly before both forces, continuing their retreat through Kifri,

on the old main road which swings round from Bagdad across the Jebel Hamrin hills to Mosul, the ancient Nineveh.

During these operations, valuable assistance was rendered by the Russian force under Colonel Bicharakhov. In the following summer, Bicharakhov, whose "Partisan Detachment" alone remained to prevent anarchy breaking loose in Persia when the demoralized Russian troops retreated to the Caspian, became Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army of the Caucasus. The Leninite *coup d'état* of November 7, 1917, had definitely placed Russia out of the war as an effective ally, but it was not until the following March that the Bolsheviks signed the Peace Treaty with the Central Powers which handed back to Turkey not only all the fruits of Russia's successes in the Middle East, since the beginning of the Great War, but also the regions of Kars, Ardahan, and Batoum, which she had captured in 1877. At the close of 1917 the position of our armies, both in Palestine and Mesopotamia, would have been critical but for the timely triumphs of Generals Allenby and Maude. By the middle of December, however, Allenby had broken the Turkish army in Palestine and captured Jerusalem.

His magnificent successes, as General Marshall acknowledged, so completely changed the military position in Mesopotamia at this period that the new Commander-in-Chief considered the time ripe to bring the whole of the Euphrates line under military and civil control, with the twofold hope

of encouraging the development of the rich agricultural land in that area and of counteracting the intrigues of enemy aliens among the sheiks of such important towns as Kerbela, Nedjef, Hilla, and Diwanie. Both Kerbela and Nedjef were holy cities, and scrupulous care was taken not to establish troops in either of them, but to quarter them at a distance. Most of the inhabitants were well-disposed towards us, but on December 12 some of the irreconcilables still remaining in Nedjef fired on the troops who were exercising in the neighbourhood, causing a few casualties. Anxious not to injure a town full of sacred memories for Mohammedans, General Marshall decided to punish two of the leading sheiks who were known to be responsible for the offence, and to levy a heavy fine. The fine was paid, but the sheiks succeeded in escaping before they could be arrested, and became outlaws.

Matters settled down satisfactorily after this until March 21, when, unfortunately, the British Political Officer in Nedjef, Captain W. L. Marshall, was murdered. This unprovoked crime was the more unexpected as Captain Marshall was known to be universally liked. No reason was given for it, and General Marshall immediately ordered a blockade of the town until all those implicated were given up. The affair became more serious when the reasons for the murder were gradually traced to enemy agency. The irreconcilables among the inhabitants of the town had formed themselves into what they called the "Committee of Re-

bellion", a conspiracy which, it was found, had been fostered by German gold, and possessed branches extending both up and down the Euphrates valley. The Middle East, indeed, was swarming with German emissaries in these critical months of 1918. To mete out stern justice to those actually concerned in the crime became, therefore, a matter of urgent necessity; and since it was undesirable to shell the city, which contained one of the holy shrines of the Shiah, or carry it by direct assault, the blockade was more rigorously enforced, and the outside water-supply cut off. This at length had the desired effect. The loyal inhabitants, under the guidance of the holy Ulema, decided to rid themselves and their sacred city of the evil-doers. By April 13 the prescribed persons had been handed over, and the blockade was raised. The instigators of the murder and the murderers themselves were tried before the military court and duly punished. The firmness with which the situation was handled, and the scrupulous care taken to avoid damage to holy persons and places, created a most favourable impression on all the surrounding tribes. For this satisfactory ending to a delicate and somewhat difficult situation the Commander-in-Chief thanked the acting Civil Commissioner, Brigadier-General G. A. F. Sanders, and the troops under his command, and also the Political Officer on the spot, Captain F. C. C. Balfour, M.C.

Meantime the agricultural development of the Hilla area, just below the site of Babylon, had made promising

strides. Many hundred tons of seed grain had been planted, with the two-fold object of benefiting the country at large and enabling the expeditionary force in due course to be dependent largely on local produce. A branch line down to Hilla was made to assist in bringing the harvest into Bagdad. The early fruits of the irrigation work in this long-neglected land were described by General Marshall as extraordinary, and promised great developments in the near future.

While General Marshall was thus combining the work of regeneration in Mesopotamia with a sound administrative policy, he scored a notable military success on the Euphrates front by an attack on Hit, in the centre of the oil country, where the Turks, who meantime had been steadily reinforced, were showing increasing signs of activity. The operations conducted by General Brooking, who, it will be remembered, was immediately responsible for the Ramadie victory, were carried out as neatly, and with a success almost as complete, as on the previous occasion. As General Marshall foresaw, there was not much difficulty in capturing Hit itself, but it was no easy matter to round up the Turkish force after the drastic lesson which the enemy had learned at Ramadie. Forced out of Hit on March 9, and Salahiya—15 miles up-stream—on the 10th, the Turks were hotly pursued by the Royal Flying Corps, which, co-operating with the infantry, bombed and machine-gunned the enemy's retreating columns and transport.

Seeing his chance of delivering a crushing blow at this stage, Sir William Marshall ordered General Brooking to drive the enemy as far back as possible, and inflict as much damage upon him as he could. With this end in view, reinforcements of mobile troops, including a cavalry brigade and light-armoured motors, moved to Hit by night, concealing themselves by day, on much the same principle as that adopted on the Western Front in some of the smashing surprise attacks in the following months. In many other ways apparently successful, the enemy was lulled into the belief that no further advance by our troops was intended. Preparations for the surprise attack on March 26 were, however, nearing completion when it became known that the Turks had already begun to evacuate their forward positions, and intended to make a stand north-west of Khan Bagdadi. Without further delay this position was accordingly carried by storm at 5.30 p.m., under cover of an effective barrage; while the cavalry, who, half an hour before, after a long and difficult march, had gained the Aleppo road where it crossed the Wadi Hauran, cut off the Turkish retreat both by road and river. Shortly before midnight the enemy made a desperate attempt to break through the centre of the cavalry, but failed utterly, leaving a thousand prisoners in our hands.

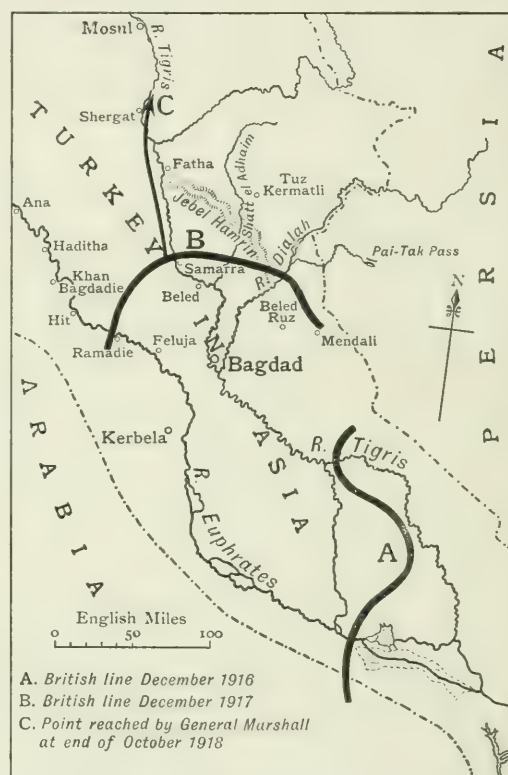
His defeat was completed at half-past five the next morning by the arrival of the infantry columns, who captured a further considerable number of prisoners, as well as all kinds

of supplies and munitions. The cavalry and the mobile column of motor-cars now took up the pursuit of the remainder of the force, and continued it for 73 miles along the Aleppo road, capturing Haditha and Khan Feheme the same day, and Ana on the 28th, as well as Turkish troops at many other places. Worn out and demoralized by the rapidity of our advance, the Turks, in most cases, surrendered freely. Altogether the prisoners included the commander and staff of the 50th Turkish Division, the commandant of Ana, two regimental commanders, 213 officers, and 5022 other ranks. There were some Germans among the captured troops, as well as 12 guns, 47 machine-guns, and a great quantity of rifles, ammunition, and stores.

Towards the end of January the state of famine to which the Turks had reduced northern Persia made it incumbent on General Marshall to open the main trade route by way of Kermanshah, "in order"—the words are his own—"to get supplies to the poor inhabitants of the towns and villages, and to provide them with an outlet for their own manufactures". The main road had been reduced to a lamentable state of disrepair, but was greatly improved as a result of the work put in hand by the British Commander-in-Chief, a large amount of tribal labour co-operating in the task.

Like Sir Stanley Maude, General Marshall attached the utmost importance to this Persian flank of his communications, hitherto safe-guarded by the Russian troops. Now that its

safety was compromised, and the route to India by way of Persia and the Caucasus offered itself to Germany in place of her lost road from "Berlin to the Persian Gulf", its importance became greater than ever. The commercial and economic treaties which



Map illustrating the British advance in Mesopotamia up to the conclusion of the Armistice with Turkey

followed the peace of Brest-Litovsk gave Germany through-traffic over Bolshevik Russia into Persia and Afghanistan, and stimulated all her political ambitions in the same significant direction. The new menace developed with startling rapidity as the first of these terms were duly carried out. Trebizond had been retaken by the Turks on February 25—six days before

the signing of the treaty; Erzerum, where the Armenians had maintained a steady defence after its abandonment by the Russians, fell on March 11. Batum, Ardahan, and Kars followed suit at various dates in the ensuing month. With the enemy's occupation of Tabriz in north-west Persia on June 17, and his advance towards Baku on the Caspian Sea, the situation became increasingly grave. Germany, who was supporting the Turks with gold and military leadership—replacing General von Falkenhayn at this stage by General Liman von Sanders, of Gallipoli fame—was now planning her third great offensive on the Western Front, which, as she loudly boasted, was to bring her the decisive victory; and this new blow at India by way of Persia was intended to crown her triumph.

It fell to General Marshall to send what help he could across Persia to the Caspian Sea, in order to stiffen and organize Armenian resistance at Baku, and, if possible, save its valuable oil wells. Some of the tribes on the Persian border, as a result of German intrigue and gold, had already been troublesome, but had been taught a number of wholesome lessons in several minor operations. These had been followed by a brilliant advance along the Mosul road, with the object of driving the Turks out of the Kara Tepe-Kifri-Tuz Kermatli area. The operations were again entrusted to General Egerton, whose main force consisted of the majority of the 13th Division, with attached troops under Major-General Sir W. De Sausmarez Cayley. Profiting by their recent

experiences, the Turks did not wait to be attacked when our infantry advanced on the night of April 26-27 in stormy and torrential rains which made the march of the detached forces over boggy ground and flooded streams exceedingly difficult and arduous in the inky darkness which prevailed at the time. The retreating enemy was overtaken by the 6th Cavalry Brigade under Brigadier-General P. Holland-Pryor after reaching his defensive position covering Tuz Kermatli from the south-east. Immediately seizing their opportunity, and feigning a frontal attack while gradually working round the enemy's right flank, our cavalry force first cut his lines of retreat and then charged in gallant style right through his infantry, killing some 200 of them, including two battalion commanders, and capturing 560 prisoners, with a machine-gun and considerable booty. After this dashing exploit, and finding the trenches south of Tuz Kermatli strongly held, the cavalry fell back on the main column, with the object of persuading the Turks that, as on previous occasions, our force would retire to their original positions.

The retreat had the desired effect of inducing the enemy to remain in his position at Tuz Kermatli until we were ready to attack in force in the early hours of the 29th on both banks of the Ak Su River. The main assault was brilliantly carried out by the 38th Infantry Brigade, supported by artillery, machine-guns, and low-flying aeroplanes. Though the Turks resisted stoutly, the infantry, as General Marshall attests, rapidly ad-

vanced in perfect order, under heavy shell and machine-gun fire, and by 7 a.m. the position was carried. Lancashire men, pressing on in pursuit, now entered Tuz Kermatli, where they captured the major portion of the Turkish forces, many of whose remnants, endeavouring to escape through the hills, were rounded up, with much transport, by the cavalry and cyclists. Altogether some 1300 prisoners were taken, besides 12 field-guns, 20 machine-guns, and large quantities of ammunition. Kifri, it should be added, had been occupied unopposed on the previous day by the small column operating on the right, and, apart from flooded coal-mines, had been found undamaged.

By April 30 the Turks had retreated as far north as Kirkuk, and, the whole intervening area having thus been cleared, the task which General Marshall had set his troops had been satisfactorily completed. Turkish activity in other parts of the Middle-East, however, with its consequent threat to India, decided the Imperial General Staff to exploit this success still further, and instructions were sent to General Marshall to continue the pressure and capture Kirkuk itself. Since this town stood some 130 miles distant from rail-head the new advance necessitated some readjustment of the troops in order to make the supply of the situation at all possible. Heavy rain had also flooded the rivers during the first week of May, and swept away the temporary bridges. Yet, in spite of all obstacles, our advance troops entered Kirkuk on the 7th unopposed, and the main body arrived on the following day.

"Kirkuk", explained General Marshall, "was in an indescribably filthy condition, and starvation was rife among the inhabitants. Our troops, therefore, were kept very busy in sanitary measures, town control, salving and destruction of military material, as well as in the evacuation of prisoners and refugees. For a time a small mobile column was left as a garrison after the main force had been withdrawn, but, though it was politically desirable to continue in occupation of this centre of Kurdistan, military considerations made this impracticable—all possible transport was required to fill the rôle allotted to us in Persia, and on the 24th May the last of our troops withdrew from Kirkuk. Before the final withdrawal all those of the inhabitants who feared the return of the Turks were evacuated as refugees by their own express desire. Those who took advantage of our offer numbered nearly 1500, and included Chaldeans, Armenians, and Mohammedans."

General Egerton, his staff, and the troops under his command were warmly praised for the able manner in which the whole sweeping operation had been conducted in the face of the vilest weather imaginable. The most satisfactory feature was that while we took over 3000 Turks as prisoners, and buried over 200 of their dead in the action at Tuz Kermatli alone, our own total casualties did not amount to more than 26 killed, and 210 wounded.

In his new Persian enterprise, General Marshall was embarked on an operation of far greater difficulty than anything with which he had yet been faced. The rains had continued so late, and been so heavy, that the road into Persia had become impracticable. In spite of urgent calls since the withdrawal of the Russian troops, he had hitherto been able to send only small

detachments in that direction, and a state of famine prevailed over the whole length of road from Kerind to Kasvin. Much praiseworthy relief work had, however, been undertaken by the mission under Major-General L. C. Dunsterville, and a great deal of the distress thus alleviated. Two American missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Stead, are also mentioned by General Marshall for their self-sacrificing work in the neighbourhood of Kermanshah, where their devotion saved many hundreds of lives.

As soon as the road to Hamadan became possible, the Commander-in-Chief rushed troops along in motor-vans as far as Kasvin to take over that place, which covers Teheran from the north and west, from Colonel Bicherakhov, whose detachment formed the rearguard of the evacuating Russian troops. This was at the end of May. When, on June 1, General Dunsterville's mission arrived there, the town was still occupied by Colonel Bicherakhov's partisans, some 1200 strong, together with weak British detachments—all that General Marshall had been able to get there in the time. A week later the Russians marched from Kasvin with the object of proceeding to Enzeli on the Caspian, and thence taking ship to Baku. They were accompanied by a small British detachment, and three days later reached Mandjil, where they found their way barred by the Jangali tribe, led by several German officers. The Germans made an attempt to parley, but, sweeping this aside, the Russians stormed and captured the bridge which the tribesmen were holding, and, as-

sisted by our light-armoured cars, pushed on to Resht and Enzeli.

General Marshall says that the moral effect of this small action was out of all proportion to its military importance, and for a time kept the Jangali leaders in order. They had previously been bolstered up by a fictitious prestige, assisted by the closely-wooded nature of their country, which gave them a sense of security. No further trouble worth mentioning arose until July 20, when they attacked a small British detachment at Resht, together with the British consulate and bank at that place. In the hand-to-hand fighting which followed, in which Hampshire and Gurkha troops greatly distinguished themselves, the attack was beaten off, and over 100 Jangalis were killed.

Our danger in this part of the world now centred in Baku, the Government of which at this time was wholly Bolshevik, and strongly opposed to British intervention. By the beginning of July, as already mentioned, Colonel Bicherakhov had accepted the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Red Army of the Caucasus, and was now in Alyat, some 35 miles south-west of Baku. On the 26th of this month a *coup d'état* took place in which the Bolshevik Government was overthrown, and its place taken by a Centro-Caspian Dictatorship, which at once appealed for British assistance. Before this could arrive Bicherakhov was convinced that the fall of the town, with strong Turkish forces within striking distance, was inevitable, and, as a

result of repeated acts of treachery on the part of the Red Guards, withdrew his detachment to the north as far as Derbend. Luckily the Turks failed to seize their opportunity at this time, or the town might easily have fallen. A small mission of British officers, with one platoon as escort, was dispatched to report on the situation, and, landing on August 4, received an enthusiastic reception as they marched through the town. Even this small party of British troops seemed to have such an electrical effect both on the citizens and Government at Baku that, when the Turks attacked on the following day, they were defeated with heavy loss.

During the remainder of August further British reinforcements were landed, General Marshall sending every man he could spare from northern Persia, where their numbers were necessarily restricted by the tremendous length and difficulties of the long line of communication. Now that the British had arrived in some force, the inhabitants at Baku seemed to think they were no longer called upon to do any fighting themselves, and gave little or no assistance to our troops. With such a situation the wonder was that the town held out so long. One pronounced salient in the defended perimeter of the town was held by a British company on August 26 against odds of five to one. They were left unsupported by the local troops, who should have been there in reserve, when the Turks attacked that day under the strong support of their artillery; and

only withdrew after suffering heavy casualties. The same thing happened five days later, when the Turks made two further attacks. After beating these off with sanguinary losses to the enemy, the British and Russian troops were compelled to withdraw owing to the retreat of some Armenian battalions on their flank. Further ground was lost on September 1, when our troops, again fighting against heavy odds without any sufficient support from our local allies, were fought back.

So heavily, however, had the Turks been punished during these repeated assaults that they did not again return to the attack until September 14, when they had received large reinforcements. On this occasion, after driving out the Armenian troops opposed to them with little difficulty—thereby causing a readjustment of the British line to save a menaced flank—they succeeded in scaling the heights defending the town. On the threatened flank three very weak British companies held out all day on the left ridge on the outskirts of Baku, a vital position dominating the whole of the town and harbour. Again and again the main strength of the Turks was hurled against these devoted companies, who held their position under heavy shell-fire throughout.

In the centre the enemy's attack was held up by rifle-fire. Here a counter-attack by British, Russians, and Armenians failed through heavy casualties on the British and Russian side—every one of their officers falling on this occasion—while Turkish shells had little difficulty in arresting the

advance of the Armenians at an early stage. General Marshall mentions that the North Staffordshire Regiment fought throughout the day with the utmost gallantry, and was ably supported by the men from the Royal Warwickshire and Worcestershire Regiments, as well as the Dunsterforce armoured cars, which were boldly handled, and accounted for large numbers of the enemy. The Turks, who had been attacking since dawn, were fought to a standstill by 4 p.m., and in General Marshall's opinion they could now have been driven back had an effective counter-attack been possible. Every British rifle, however, was in the line, and by this time both the Russian and the Armenian troops were incapable of any further action.

Since the town was now at the mercy of the enemy, who held all the high ground and had brought the shipping and the port within effective range of his guns, it was reluctantly decided to evacuate the British detachment forthwith. The Baku Government having been informed of this decision, all our sick and wounded were carried on board at 8 p.m. These were followed by the rest of the troops and guns, and by 10 p.m., with all aboard, the three ships which had been kept for British troops since their arrival in Baku slipped away in the darkness, sailing without lights. They were closely followed by another ship in which explosives and ammunition had been collected. This vessel, as it happened, was the only one hit by gun-fire from the guard-ship at the mouth of the

harbour. The others slipped away unscathed, and all four arrived safely at Enzeli.

Happily, the set-back at Baku was neutralized a few days later by the opening of General Allenby's new campaign in Palestine, which eventually resulted in the occupation of Damascus and Aleppo, and the final overthrow of the Turks. In some ways this was to prove the most remarkable victory won during the war. No operations had been more heavily handicapped by the Russian collapse than General Allenby's campaign in the Holy Land. The new turn of affairs not only revived all the Turco-German ambitions in the East, but deprived the liberator of Jerusalem of some of his best infantry divisions in order that they might strengthen the battered British line on the Western Front after Ludendorff's offensive in March. It meant the reorganization of the whole of Allenby's army, and the training of the newly-formed Indian battalions sent to take the place of the British regiments summoned to France and Flanders.

Before this happened, however, considerable progress had been made in the Palestine campaign since we reviewed the situation in the opening chapter of the present volume. The Turks, with German assistance, had made a determined attempt to recapture Jerusalem before the close of 1917, but, as a result of the three days' battle from December 27-29, they were totally defeated with a loss of about 1000 killed and 600 prisoners, as well as some 7 miles of ground—won in the masterly counter-stroke

delivered by General Allenby as soon as the Turkish attack had been spent. These new territorial gains included positions of great strategical importance, providing four strong points between the enemy and Jerusalem instead of the one existing before the

several miles, and was pushed eastwards on February 19 by a more serious advance towards Jericho. Realizing the danger of this threat to their communications on both sides of the Jordan, the Turks offered a fierce resistance in the difficult country



Photographed by Captain Hurley, Australian Official Photographer in Palestine

With the Australian Mounted Troops in Palestine: on the march between Bethlehem and Jerusalem

Turkish attack. London Territorials, troops from the home counties, dismounted yeomanry, Welsh and Irish troops, all fought with the highest courage throughout the series of engagements which thus brought the year 1917 to a close.

During the next two months our line was carried farther northwards for

among the mountain ridges through which our troops had to move. One after another, however, of these mountain heights were swept by London infantrymen and gunners, while Australian mounted troops, who had started from near Bethlehem, searched the crags and boulders of the lower levels.

Unable to withstand the combined advance of the infantry and the mounted Australians—now seriously threatening their rear—the Turks abandoned Jericho without a struggle, the Australians entering the town at 8.20 a.m. on February 21, subsequently establishing themselves on the line of the Jordan and its tributary, the Wadi Auja, 6 miles north of Jericho. Their arrival on the banks of the Jordan meant an advance of 21 miles from Jerusalem, and brought the British line within some 25 miles of the Hejaz railway, from which the enemy's left flank, between the Jordan and the Jerusalem-Shechem road, received its supplies.

It was along the Hejaz railway (see Volume VII, Chapter XIX, on the Palestine campaign) that the Arab forces of the King of Hejaz were operating. They had already rendered valuable assistance in extensive raids along the Turkish railway, besides rescuing many suffering Armenians who had been deported by the Turks, to die in the desert areas east of that line. They were now working their way along the section of the Hejaz railway east of the Dead Sea in the direction of Amman, the enemy's main railway depot in that region, and within 30 miles of General Allenby's new line.

In conjunction with his advance to the Jordan, General Allenby also struck northwards once more, Welsh divisions on the same day improving our advanced positions and preventing the Turks from reinforcing their battalions on the other side of the river. The line astride the Jerusalem-

Nablus road was slowly advanced during the following month through precipitous and most trying country, and in the face of determined resistance—especially from numerous machine-gun posts in concealed positions—which made rapid progress impossible. In the coastal area, where there had been little fighting since the close of 1917, East Anglian, South Anglian, and Indian troops attacked on March 12 on a front of 11 miles, bringing their positions in line with those already won astride the Jerusalem-Nablus road.

In the Jordan valley the British right wing was also carried forward to conform with the same advance, securing the high ground crossing the road from Nablus to Jericho, 3 miles north of the Wadi Auja and 10 miles above Jericho. With the right bank of the Jordan now in his possession practically from this point to the Dead Sea, General Allenby decided to cross the river and strike at the Hejaz railway. Anticipating this move, the Turks, at the beginning of March, had blown up their concrete bridge over the Jordan at El Ghoraniyeh carrying the road from Jericho and Jerusalem, which ran thence towards Es Salt, and Amman on the Hejaz line. The bridge had been built by the Germans some years before in place of the old wooden structure. Having blown it up, the Turks entrenched themselves on the east bank and awaited developments. They were kept completely in the dark, however, as to our plans for getting across. Deceived in other directions, they failed to prevent the

passage of our troops in the early hours of March 22, when the river, despite a dangerously strong current, was securely bridged at Makhadet-Hajlah—4 miles below the destroyed bridge at El Ghoraniyeh—where the pilgrims' road to the Jordan ends.

Though too late to prevent the crossing, the enemy offered considerable resistance when our forces, having established themselves on the left bank not only at this point but also at Ghoraniyeh, began to push eastwards in the direction of the Hejaz railway. Two days later, notwithstanding a heavy thunderstorm, which made the going indescribably difficult in the mountainous country east of the Jordan, Allenby's men had advanced 9 miles in the face of much opposition from German as well as Turkish troops. One London battalion distinguished itself by capturing an entire hostile battery as a result of a dashing attack in the course of this march.

Es Salt was occupied on March 25, the anniversary of the first battle of Gaza. Raiding operations were now carried out by the Australian and New Zealand mounted troops and the Imperial Camel Corps, who, pressing on to the Hejaz line near Amman, completely destroyed several miles of railway track, including culverts and important bridges, thus cutting the enemy's communications with Medina.¹ The enemy, however, still controlled the crossing at Jisr-ed-Damieh, and, thus able to transfer troops from the

west to the east bank of the Jordan, was able to reinforce his troops in such considerable numbers that our raiding force was first withdrawn towards Es Salt and thence back to the Jordan.

Elated by what they proclaimed to be a British repulse, a strong force of Turco-German troops now assumed the offensive against the coastal sector of our front on April 10. After penetrating our advance positions here, they were ejected by counter-attacks, and our lines were advanced at several points. A similar fate awaited the Turkish attack on the following day, directed against our positions on the east bank of the Jordan guarding our bridge-head at El Ghoraniyeh; as well as a simultaneous assault against our line astride the Jericho-Nablus road on the other side of the river.

Useful help had meantime approached Allenby's right wing from the Arab force of the King of the Hejaz under Prince Faisul, son of King Hussein, who, sweeping up the Hejaz railway, repeatedly raided the defences of the line both north and south of Maan, east of the Dead Sea, while the Turks were doing their utmost to drive us back across the Jordan. The Arabs had accounted for more than 40,000 Turkish troops since proclaiming their independence and joining the Allied cause, besides clearing the enemy from the whole of the Red Sea coast, and playing havoc with the Hejaz railway. Anxious to assist in this direction as soon as possible, the second advance to Es Salt was ordered by General Allenby towards the end of April. The march

¹The sacred city holding the tomb of Mohammed, which remained in Turkish hands—besieged by the Arabs—long after the enemy had been swept from the rest of Hejaz.

began on the 30th, and on the following day Es Salt was surrounded and captured by Australian mounted troops, together with 350 prisoners, including 33 Germans.

In order to prevent a repetition of the last set-back, a mounted brigade had been sent northwards to hold the crossing at Jisr-ed-Damieh, and stop reinforcements from being transferred to the Turks across the river as before. Unfortunately, the enemy—recently stiffened by parts of two German divisions withdrawn from Mesopotamia—arrived in such overwhelming force that our mounted brigade was not strong enough for its task. Crossing the Jordan during the night, well to the north of Jisr-ed-Damieh, the Turco-German troops crept south along the river bank, and attacked in such strength that our mounted brigade was driven back to our bridge-head at El Ghoraniyeh. In the retreat, nine light guns—magnified in the Turkish version of the fight to “the guns of an entire enemy cavalry division”—had to be abandoned in the river valley. The more serious consequence was that the left flank of our Es Salt column was now uncovered, and our previous experience having proved that the communications of a force in the hills of Moab were liable to interruption so long as the enemy was able thus to transfer troops from the west to the east bank of the river, another general retirement to the Jordan was ordered on May 3. This was successfully carried out after several attempts on the part of the Shechem reinforcements to carry our positions at Es Salt. All

our Turkish and German prisoners, to the number of nearly a thousand, were brought back as well. The bulk of our troops were subsequently withdrawn over the river, strong detachments being left, however, to hold our bridge-head on the eastern bank.

This second check to Allenby's right wing coincided with the crisis on the Western Front, when, as Sir Douglas Haig said in his memorable Order of the Day on April 12, we were fighting “with our backs to the wall”; and Palestine, as well as other theatres of the war, now had to send what help it could to meet the main emergency.

The lull which followed in the Holy Land while General Allenby was re-making his army, with material sent him from India, the West Indies, and elsewhere, was not seriously broken until July 13, when the Turco-German forces on the east of the Jordan made their supreme attempt to recapture the river crossings and Jericho. The initial success won by the enemy on this occasion was short-lived. Next day the position was completely restored, and over 500 prisoners—the greater portion of them Germans—were captured by Australians and New Zealanders. This was the last affair of any consequence on the Palestine front until September 18—just after Baku, as we have shown in our section on the Mesopotamian campaign, had to be yielded up to the Turks—when General Allenby made his first move in the final and triumphant advance which, in less than six weeks, was to burst right through the enemy's defences, utterly destroy

the three Turco-German armies opposed to him, and complete the conquest of Syria.

All doubts as to the fighting qualities of General Allenby's new troops were soon set at rest. The young battalions of Indian infantry, as well as the older regiments of Indian cavalry, and the other newer units of this strangely assorted army—now including the troops of the *Légion d'Orient*, the *Tirailleurs Algériens*, the 1st Battalion Cape Corps, the 38th and 39th (Jewish) Battalions of the Royal Fusiliers, and the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the British West Indies Regiment, as well as the Italian detachment—earned the Commander-in-Chief's praise in many gallant fights. With all these reinforcements General Allenby possessed a considerable superiority over the enemy in numbers, especially in mounted troops, whose part it was to provide what was probably the most signal example in the whole of the war of the value of the "white arm" in sweeping operations on a big scale.

Superiority in strength was essential to success in any attempt to destroy the Fourth, Seventh, and Eighth Turkish Armies, under the supreme command of General Liman von Sanders—computed at 23,000 rifles, 3000 sabres, and 340 guns, with a total ration strength of 104,000—which faced General Allenby's troops in powerful positions along a line stretching from the sea across the Nablus-Jerusalem road to the Jordan valley, above the Wadi el Auja, and shown in the map on p. 305—a line held through most of the summer months. In addition to these forces,

which were all enclosed in a rectangle 45 miles in length, and only 12 miles in depth, the enemy had a scattered reserve of not more than 3000 rifles and 30 guns distributed between Tiberias, Nazareth, and Haifa, besides the garrison of Maan and other posts on the Hejaz railway, consisting of another 30 guns and some 6000 rifles.

When General Allenby, whose total force in the fighting line consisted of some 12,000 sabres, 57,000 rifles, and 540 guns, planned the great campaign in September the centre of his front was only 18 miles north of Jerusalem, with its right not more than 10 miles north of Jericho and its left on the coast, only 8 miles north of Joppa. The Turks on their left were still barring our path from the west bank of the Jordan in the direction of the Hejaz railway, and regarded as impregnable their positions in the centre, among the precipitous hills of Ephraim, with numerous guns largely served by Austrians and Germans. On their right wing, guarding the Plain of Sharon across the 10 miles from Jiljulieh (the ancient Gilgal) to the sea, they had constructed two series of deep and elaborate defensive systems, connected by continuous fire trenches, each system 3000 yards in depth. It was along this coastal plain that General Allenby decided to deliver his main blow when he opened his campaign on September 18, the while he deceived the Turks into the belief that he would make another attempt to advance, as they had fully anticipated, east of the Jordan.

His plan, however, was first to

overwhelm the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies west of the Jordan, and so isolate the Fourth Army in the Jordan valley, at the same time pushing his cavalry through as far as El Afule and Beisan, the two vital points in their communications, and seizing both before they could make good their escape. It was all-important that these points, respectively 45 and 60 miles distant, should be reached at the earliest possible moment, before the enemy could man the passes, and it was only possible to get there in time along the coastal plain. Among the hills astride the Jerusalem-Nablus road the operations in March had proved that in the face of determined opposition no more than 5 miles a day could be reckoned on. Hence, the plain along the coast—Napoleon's own route in his Syrian campaign—was the only possible one for the rapid and decisive advance necessary to the success of General Allenby's ambitious plan.

The main difficulty lay in concealing the two cavalry divisions which had to be withdrawn for the purpose from the Jordan valley, and in concentrating secretly a large force of all arms on the coastal plain before the advance could begin. The concentration was carried out by nightfall, excellent use being made of the many groves round Ramleh, Lydda, and Jaffa to conceal the troops during the day, and every precaution taken to prevent the Turks from discovering any movements likely to arouse their suspicions. That this secrecy was maintained to the last General Allenby attributed to the supremacy which

had been obtained by the Royal Air Force. The process of wearing down the enemy's strength in the air had been continuous throughout the summer. In this respect our ascendancy became so marked towards the end of August that few of the enemy's aeroplanes ventured up, with the result that Allenby's troops were immune from air attacks during the operations, and the whole strength of our own air force was concentrated on the enemy in his retreat. That the Turks were kept in ignorance of the British intention to attack in the coastal plain in overwhelming numbers was clear from the fact that when this main assault was launched under General Bulfin on the morning of September 19—following Sir Philip Chetwode's preliminary advance east of the Bireh-Nablus road on the previous night—their dispositions were found to be normal.

General Bulfin, commanding the 21st Corps,¹ was ordered to break through the enemy's defences across the Plain of Sharon and so create a gap for the cavalry to pass through. His troops, at the same time, were to seize the foothills south-east of Jiljulieh, and then to swing to the right, subsequently advancing in a north-easterly direction through the hills converging on Samaria and Attara in order to drive the enemy up the Messudie-Jenin road into the

¹ In addition to the 3rd (Lahore), 7th (Meerut), 54th and 75th Divisions, which already formed part of the 21st Corps, General Allenby had placed at General Bulfin's disposal the 60th Division, the French detachment, the 5th Australian Light Brigade, two brigades of mountain artillery, and eighteen batteries of heavy and siege artillery.

arms of the cavalry, who by this time were expected to have reached El Afule, thus cutting off his retreat.

The cavalry's task was entrusted to General Chauvel, commanding the Desert Mounted Corps, less the Australian and New Zealand mounted division, which had remained in the Jordan valley with General Chaytor's forces to assist in the series of demonstrations arranged with the object of persuading the enemy that the impending attack would take place east of the Jordan. The 20th Corps, under Sir Philip Chetwode, had made the preliminary move on the previous night by advancing its line east of the Bireh-Nablus road in order to place the 53rd Division on its right flank, where it was somewhat drawn back, to a more favourable position to advance and block the exits to the lower valley of the Jordan. On the evening of the main attack, Sir Philip's task was to carry out a further advance with both the 53rd and 10th Divisions; while east of the Jordan, outflanking the Fourth Turkish Army, a mobile column of the Arab army, accompanied by British armoured cars and a French mountain battery, had already struck in the direction of Deraa, with the result that all through-traffic thence down the Hejaz railway to Palestine had ceased, and the last loophole of escape had been closed to the enemy.

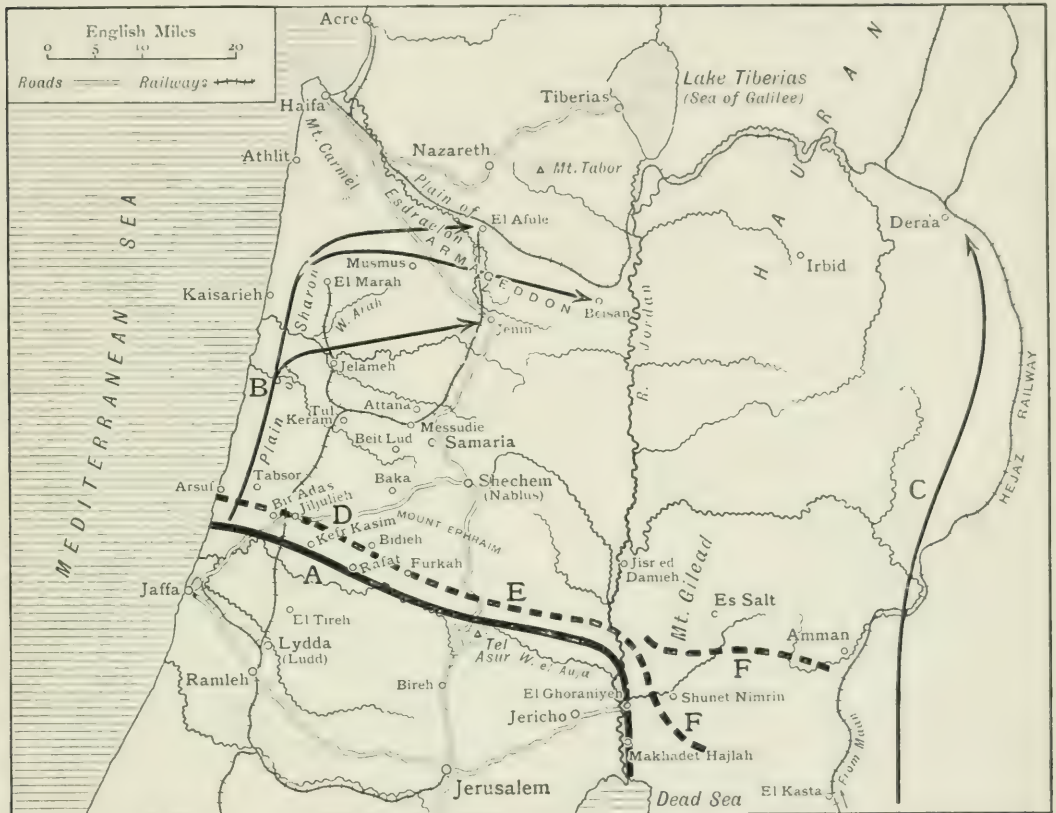
So carefully were all the plans prepared, and so completely were the Turks surprised when General Allenby burst right through in the coastal sector on September 19, that the whole

scheme, elaborate and far-reaching as it was, worked like a miracle. The operations were divided by the Commander-in-Chief himself into five phases. The first lasted only thirty-six hours, but in that short time a greater part of the Eighth Turkish Army, holding the front from Furkah to the sea, had been overwhelmed, and the troops of the Seventh Turkish Army, which held the 20-miles front from Furkah to the River Jordan, were in full retreat through the hills of Samaria, little realizing that Allenby's cavalry was already at El Afule and Beisan, and had blocked their main lines of retreat. The cavalry had moved up out of the groves in which they lay hidden early on the morning of the 19th, and formed up in rear of General Bulfin's assaulting troops before they advanced to the attack. So swiftly were both Turkish systems of defence in the coastal plain carried by the infantry under cover of an intense bombardment—in which two torpedo-boat destroyers assisted—that a way was open to the cavalry quite early in the day. By noon the leading troops of the Desert Mounted Corps were already 18 miles north of the original front line, and, after a brief rest, continued the advance at the same rapid rate. The 5th Cavalry Division, moving first north and then north-east, and riding through the hills of Samaria, descended into the fertile Plain of Esdraelon.

While the 14th Cavalry Brigade was then directed on El Afule, the 13th marched to Nazareth, where the Yilderim General Head-quarters were

situated. A little earlier and the German leader of the whole of the enemy's forces in Palestine and Mesopotamia, General Liman von Sanders, might have fallen into our hands. He just

then marched to El Afule, arriving there as the 4th Cavalry Division rode down the Plain of Jezreel to Beisan, which it reached after traversing the Field of Armageddon, and



Map illustrating the Opening Phase of General Allenby's Decisive Campaign in Palestine, September 18-20, 1918

A, General Allenby's main line from coast to Dead Sea, September 18. B, Outflanking movement by cavalry to cut off enemy's retreat, September 19. C, Advance of Arab army's flying column outflanking retreat of Fourth Turkish Army. D, Position of Eighth Turkish Army, September 18. E, Position of Seventh Turkish Army, September 18. F, Position of Fourth Turkish Army, September 18.

succeeded, however, in beating a hurried retreat, but his papers and some of his staff were captured by our wholly-unexpected cavalry. In the street fighting, which took place before the little town of so many sacred memories was cleared of the enemy, some 2000 prisoners were taken. The 13th Cavalry Brigade

covering some 80 miles in thirty-four hours.

The 4th Cavalry Division had meantime followed the valley of the Wadi Arah into the hills. This valley gradually narrows until the pass at Musmus is reached—a position which the Turks endeavoured to hold by sending a battalion from El

Afule. Only the enemy's advance-guard arrived in time, and, overcoming its resistance, our cavalry met the remainder of the battalion in the open. Thereupon the 2nd Lancers charged, killing forty-six of the enemy with the lance and capturing the remainder, some 470 in number. The 4th Cavalry Division then continued to march to El Afule, which it reached half an hour after its capture by the 14th Cavalry Brigade. It had been followed into the Plain of Esdraelon by the Australian Mounted Division, which was directed on Jenin, where the road from Messudie to El Afule leaves the hills. The capture of Jenin by the Australians, after a sharp fight, completed the wide sweep of the cavalry round the Turkish flank, which resulted in the complete debacle of the Turkish Seventh and Eighth Armies. All the main outlets of escape remaining to both armies had been closed within thirty-six hours of the commencement of Allenby's new campaign, and capture could only be avoided, if at all, by using the tracks which ran south-east from the neighbourhood of Nablus to the crossings over the river at Jisr-ed-Damieh. These, too, were being rapidly denied to them, and the resistance of the whole of the enemy's force was crumbling before the increasing pressure on all sides. Disorganized bodies of Turks and Germans were soon streaming across the plain towards Tul Keram, and the road to Messudie and Nablus became blocked by bodies of enemy troops, guns, and motor-lorries, and

transport of every description. The confusion was added to by the persistent attacks of the Royal Air Force and Australian Flying Corps, from which there was no escape. The task of the 20th Corps, astride the Jerusalem-Nablus road, was more difficult than that assigned to Bulfin's troops. The enemy in this portion



General Sir Edmund Allenby, K.C.B.
(From a photograph by H. Walter Barnett)

of the field maintained a sturdy resistance, the broken and rugged country in which he held his positions demanding great physical exertion on the part of the attacking troops, and preventing the artillery from keeping pace with the infantry. Nevertheless, good progress was made on the night of September 19 and during the following day.

The second phase of General Allenby's campaign saw the reaping

of the fruits of the initial success. Pressing relentlessly on the heels of the retreating enemy, our infantry drove him right into the arms of the cavalry, with the result that practically the whole of the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies were captured, together with their guns and transport. While the 4th Cavalry and the Australian mounted divisions were collecting the remnants of both shattered armies, so that few succeeded in escaping, General Allenby seized the opportunity of occupying Acre and Haifa with the Desert Mounted Corps.

Part of the garrison of Haifa was intercepted by the advancing cavalry in an attempt to escape to Tiberias. Approaching the outposts of the 13th Cavalry Brigade in the early hours of September 22, these fugitive troops were attacked in the moonlight by the 18th Lancers, who killed a large number of them and captured over 300. Haifa itself was found to be still held by the Turks, with the road barricaded and artillery posted on Mount Carmel ready to shell any approaching foe. The 5th Cavalry Division came under shell-fire on arriving within some 2 miles of the town, where it also found both the road and the river crossings defended by numerous machine-guns. Thereupon the Mysore Lancers cleared the rocky slopes of Mount Carmel, while the Jodhpur Lancers, charging through the defile which led to the town, and riding over the enemy's machine-guns, galloped right into the streets, where a number of Turks were speared. In this gallant charge, Colonel

Thaput Dalpat Singh, M.C., fell at the head of his men. Some 1350 prisoners and 17 guns were captured. At Acre, farther north, the 13th Cavalry Brigade marched direct on that town from Nazareth, and met with little opposition. The garrison of 150 men, with two guns, made a vain attempt to escape to the north, the whole force being rounded up and captured.

Now that the Seventh and Eighth Turkish Armies had been wiped out, there remained only the Fourth Turkish Army to deal with; and this, completely cut off east of the Jordan, in the country west and south of Amman, was, as it were, between the devil and the deep sea with Allenby's victorious troops on one side and the harassing Arab army on the other. The last loophole of escape to the Turkish forces west of the Jordan having been closed on the 22nd by the capture of the crossing at Jisr ed Damieh, the position of the isolated Fourth Army—hitherto undisturbed by the dramatic turn of events on the other side—became untenable. The morning of the 23rd found it in full retreat on Es Salt and Amman, pursued by the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division and bombed by the Royal Air Force.

This began the third phase of General Allenby's operations. Before the day was over, Es Salt was again in our hands—captured by the New Zealanders with 380 prisoners and three guns. Two days later Amman followed suit, the enemy continuing his flight along the Hejaz railway and the old pilgrim road, where our

Arab allies were waiting to increase his disorder with a swift succession of smashing blows. The Australian and New Zealand mounted troops followed in pursuit, taking over 5000 prisoners and 28 guns, while General Chaytor's force remained at Amman to intercept the troops of the Second Turkish Army, who were now retreating from Hejaz, and were on their road from Maan, which they had evacuated on the 23rd, with other Arab forces on their heels. On the 28th they found their way barred by Chaytor's force. Seeing that escape was impossible, the Turkish commander surrendered on the following day with 5000 men. Few, indeed, of all these retreating armies escaped from General Allenby's far-flung net. In order to gather up the retreating remnants of the Fourth Army, he now sent the Desert Mounted Corps to Damascus with orders to occupy that city and intercept the fugitives.

This marked the beginning of the fourth phase. The Desert Mounted Corps marched on Damascus in two columns, the 4th Cavalry Division advancing from Beisan and reaching its destination by the south end of the Sea of Galilee, and thence by way of Irbid and Deraa; the Australian Mounted Division and the 5th Cavalry Division marching from Tiberias and Nazareth respectively, and thence round the north end of the Sea of Galilee, and on through El Kuneitra. The 4th Cavalry Division started on its 120-mile march on the afternoon of the 26th; the other column, which had about 30 miles less to cover, a day later. When they started some

45,000 Turks were known to be still in Damascus, or retreating on that town; and though all their units were disorganized it only needed time to enable them to assemble a force capable of delaying Allenby's advance.

All possibility of this was removed by the vigour and dash of our mounted troops. Both columns met with fierce opposition in places where the difficulties of the ground gave the enemy countless opportunities of defence, but, driving his rear-guards back, both columns arrived within striking distance of Damascus on September 30. The 4th Cavalry Division had now joined forces with the Arabs, who advanced on their right flank, rounding up many stragglers on the way. The exits from Damascus to the north and north-west having been closed by the Australian Mounted Division by the evening of the 30th, by which time the 5th Cavalry Division has reached the southern outskirts, the Desert Mounted Corps entered Damascus with the Arab army on the following day in triumph. "The oldest city in the world" had been freed from the Turks after four centuries of misrule, and the liberators were greeted with great enthusiasm by the inhabitants. After the surrender of the town, and when the German and Turkish troops had been collected—over 7000 prisoners were taken—the Allied troops were withdrawn, save for the necessary guards, the local authorities remaining responsible for its administration.

There only remained of all the Turkish armies in Palestine and Syria the scattered and disorganized units, now in full flight northwards, to the

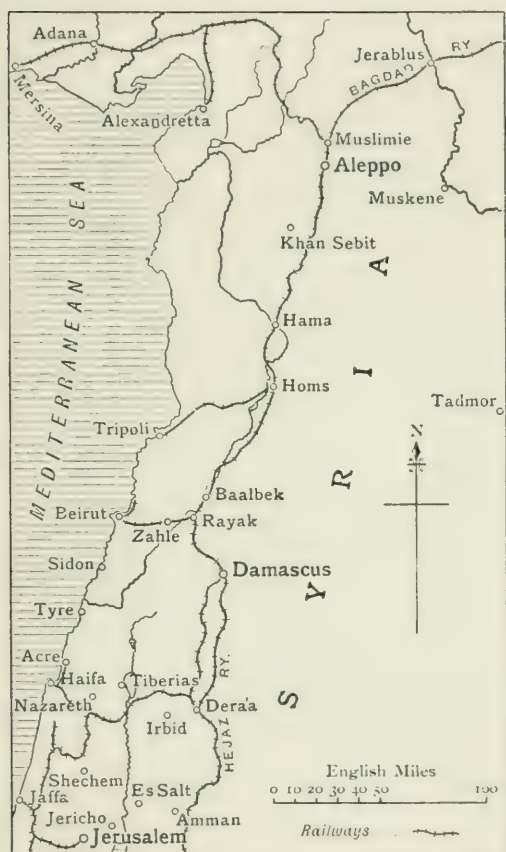
total number of some 17,000. Not more than 4000 of these could be reckoned as effective rifles, and all, in General Allenby's own words, were just "a mass of individuals, without organization, without transport, and

in addition, had fallen to the Arab army of King Hussein.

Without pausing to rest on his laurels, General Allenby exploited this success by an advance to the line Rayak-Beirut. Rayak was 30 miles north-west, at the important junction of the broad-gauge railway to Aleppo, and the metre-gauge lines to Beirut and to Damascus and Hejaz. Both Rayak and Zahle—7 miles on the road to Beirut, and at the foot of Mount Lebanon—were occupied without opposition, on October 5, by the Desert Mounted Corps, which had left the Australian mounted division at Damascus. The Australians, by the way, had caught an enemy column in their net on October 2, some 17 miles north-east of Damascus, taking 1500 prisoners and 3 guns.

Beirut was occupied on the 8th by the 7th (Meerut) Division. This furnished General Allenby with a useful port—already entered by ships of the French navy—besides the road and railway running inland to Rayak. The Meerut division had marched to "Beirut the Beautiful" along the coast from Haifa, and, crossing the Ladder of Tyre, had been received with enthusiasm as it passed through the ancient cities of Tyre and Sidon. A similar welcome awaited it from the inhabitants of Beirut, the only Turkish troops remaining being 720 officers and men, who had already surrendered and were now handed over.

General Allenby's fifth phase began on the following day (October 9), when the final advance was ordered which led in swift succession first to Tripoli, occupied by the 21st Corps



Map illustrating General Allenby's Line of Advance from Jerusalem to Damascus, Aleppo, and the Muslimie Junction of the Bagdad Railway

without any of the accessories required to enable it to act even on the defensive". Altogether over 70,000 prisoners and 350 guns had been captured by Allenby's army since September 18, including between 3000 and 4000 German and Austrian troops. Some 8000 prisoners, in

cavalry regiment and armoured cars on October 13; and Homs, half-way to Aleppo, on the broad-gauge railway from Rayak, taken by the 5th Cavalry Division of the Desert Mounted Corps; and then, as a crowning result, to Aleppo—160 miles north of Damascus and within 10 miles of Muslimie, the all-important junction of the Syrian railways and the Bagdad railway. Aleppo was also intended as the ultimate destination of General Marshall's army—now pushing up the Tigris towards Mosul, to join forces with Allenby—and was reported to be held by General von Sanders with a force of some 20,000 Turks and Germans. Only some 8000 of these were combatants, and they were demoralized. As time was of the utmost importance, and the 5th Cavalry Division and armoured-car batteries were alone available, General Allenby decided that these would be strong enough for the task of seizing Aleppo now that Homs and Tripoli had been taken. The armoured cars reached Khan Sebit, half-way between Homs and Aleppo, on October 22, just as the enemy's rear-guard decamped from the village in lorries; but not all of these succeeded in escaping. The enemy was not encountered again until October 24, when, within some 5 miles of Aleppo, strong Turkish rear-guards held up the armoured cars until the cavalry came up, the 15th (Imperial Service) Cavalry Brigade joining the cars on the following afternoon.

Some of our Arab allies having forced an entry into Aleppo during the night of October 26, our armoured cars and the 15th Cavalry Brigade

took up the pursuit of the retreating rear-guard, consisting of some 2500 infantry and 150 cavalry, with 8 guns, early on the following morning. Gaining touch with the enemy south-east of Haritan, the Mysore Lancers and two squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers were hurled at his left under



Ismail Hakki Pasha, captured with 7000 Turkish prisoners in General Marshall's closing campaign in Mesopotamia

covering fire from the armoured cars, the machine-gun squadron, and two dismounted squadrons of the Jodhpur Lancers. The Indian cavalrymen delivered their charge in the most gallant style, spearing a number of the enemy, and passing right through the rear-guard. Many of the Turks threw down their arms, only to pick them up again when the weakness of our cavalry became apparent; and as

the squadrons were not strong enough to complete the victory they were withdrawn until a larger force could be assembled.

Muslimie Junction was occupied that night, and the Australian mounted division ordered to join the advance troops from Damascus in order to continue the march on Alexandretta, the last port in Syria. Before the Australians could arrive, however, the Ottoman Government had thrown up the sponge, and Turkey was definitely out of the war. The crushing succession of defeats, both in Palestine and Mesopotamia, together with the collapse of Bulgaria and the disastrous course of events on the Western Front and Italy, had convinced Turkey that the sooner she capitulated the better. While the British were sweeping from one victory to another in the wonderful days of October, 1918, General Townshend, who had remained a prisoner in Turkish hands since the surrender of Kut, was liberated in order to inform the British Admiral in command in the *Ægean* Sea that the Turkish Government was willing to open negotiations for an immediate armistice. The Turkish plenipotentiaries arrived in Mudros before the end of the month, and on the 30th Vice-Admiral Calthorpe, on behalf of the Allied Governments, signed the armistice, which came into operation at noon on the following day.

Just before it came into force General Marshall, who opened his last campaign on the Tigris on October 18, was able to complete his operations with the capture of the entire Turkish force opposed to him, including the Turkish Commander, Ismail Hakki Pasha. He had advanced to within 50 miles of Mosul, and won his final victory by another daring out-flanking movement with his cavalry. All told, General Marshall took about 7000 prisoners in this concluding campaign in Mesopotamia, together with a large quantity of war material of every description. Baku, which had passed into the hands of the Turks during the short period between its evacuation by the British and the armistice, was re-occupied by British and Russian troops on November 17. By the terms of the armistice the Allies also secured a free passage for their fleets through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea, the occupation of the forts in the Dardanelles necessary to secure that passage, and the immediate repatriation of all Allied prisoners of war without reciprocity. Three weeks later Allied troops landed in Constantinople, off which the Allied fleets had anchored on November 13. Just three days before that the last port in Syria, Alexandretta, was occupied in accordance with the terms of the armistice.

F. A. M.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST PHASE OF THE GERMAN RETREAT

(October–November, 1918).

Franco-British Sectors east and west of the Oise—Position in Artois, Champagne, and the Argonne—Rheims freed—The Chemin-des-Dames retaken—Laon reoccupied—Haig captures the Scheldt Canal—Attack on October 8th by British Third and Fourth Armies—Canadians in Cambrai—Value of the Cavalry—The Battle of Le Cateau and its Gains—Position of Allied Armies in mid-October—Franco-British Operations on the Line of the Selle—First Phase on the Sambre-et-Oise Canal—The Selle River Positions taken—The Action described—Advance from the Selle to the Valenciennes-Mormal Line—The 51st Division—The Prince of Wales in Denain—The encirclement of Valenciennes—Debeney and the Oise-Serre Salient—Pétain's Advance—Propaganda—The British Flag over Valenciennes—Turning the Line of the Scheldt—Decisive Attack by the First, Third, and Fourth Armies on November 4th—New Zealanders and Le Quesnoy—The Feat of the Camerons and Northamptonshires on the Sambre—Effect of Haig's Blow—Debeney's Advance—General Liggett's Americans—Germans in General Retreat—Allies cross the Scheldt—Sedan entered—The German Front cut—Maubeuge re-entered by the Guards—The Canadians take Mons—The hour of the Armistice—The end of the War—Terms and Summary.

MARSHAL FOCH, in an interview which he granted after the war, and in which he departed from the extreme reserve maintained by French commanders after operations, as well as during their progress, paid the highest compliment to the blow struck by the army of General Rawlinson between Cambrai and St. Quentin. That victory, seconded by General Debeney's effort on either side of St. Quentin, was, in his view, evidently the blow which removed the keystone of the arch of the German structural lines. This irreparable gap in the Germans' defences could not be bridged, because they had not the numbers of men necessary to hold up, without fortifications, the Allied armies which they could not hold up with them.

Haig's fierce thrust with the weapon of the Fourth Army had made one sector so vulnerable that the Germans could never take their eyes off it, and

the danger was emphasized by its situation in the very middle of their line, and at the pivot of their two-fold retreat. There were many minor weak points—this was a major defect in their retreating line, and one which must imperil their safe retirement to the Meuse. A second major gap was presently to be opened, which threatened to cut the lateral communications between the Crown Prince's armies in the Argonne and those in Lorraine; and we have Marshal Foch's word for it that, had not the armistice come when it did, he was prepared to launch twenty divisions in Lorraine on November 14, and so to force the Germans to abandon Metz. Had that blow been delivered, and remained unparried, a second major injury would have been inflicted on the German structural defence such as they could not have survived.

It was Hindenburg's opinion that the blow could not be parried, and that the German armies would have

survived only as beaten and dispirited bodies of men. Whether any colossal captures would have been made it is unprofitable to discuss. Marshal Foch pointed out frankly in the statement which has been quoted that great envelopments and corresponding captures of troops were not probable or

the German army had reached the Meuse, the process of tearing fragments out of it, which had been going on steadily and progressively since July, would have quickened and become more fruitful, while the loss by the Germans of ammunition would have weakened their defence more



Clearing Up a Machine-gun Nest: a daylight patrol at work

Associated Press Photograph

The Germans had been firing with machine guns from these dug-outs half an hour before the photograph was taken. The officer in charge of the patrol may be noticed emerging from one of the dug-outs after searching it.

possible as the fruits of an advance along a front of several hundred miles, because envelopment on such a scale as the conditions demanded became impracticable when the enemy in his retreat destroyed most of the roads and encumbered the others with his abandoned material. Envelopment on such a scale would require a swiftness of pursuit which could not be maintained. But it is probable, and indeed very likely, that before

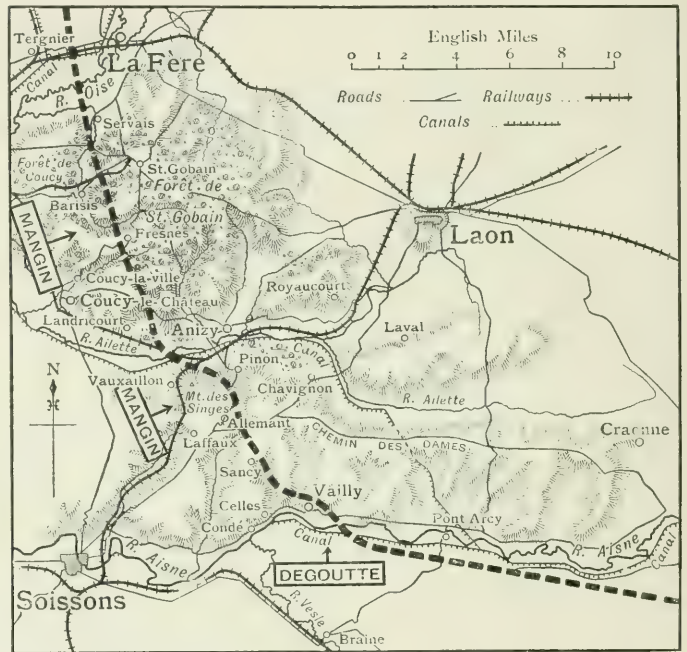
than the transport of their guns and supplies hampered their retreat.

The advance of the French and American armies east of the Oise was less rapid than in the sector west of that river. But the way was harder, the going more difficult, the German line more compact. There was the Argonne Forest, with its unending labyrinth of entrenchments, to tax all the perseverance as well as the skill and courage of General Pershing's

men. Opposite General Gouraud on the Champagne front were a succession of powerfully fortified positions, including the Monthois-Orfeuil line, which taxed all the powers of the French Fourth Army. The potential difficulties of the Moronvilliers position, with its counterparts at Nogent l'Abbesse and Brimont, will be appreciated by all who have studied the task which the French surmounted at Moronvilliers at the first time of taking. The Chemin-des-Dames and the great buttress of St. Gobain were others of the obstacles they had to make their way over, or round.

The only questions were how fast would the Germans retreat; and how great a penalty could the pursuers exact from the retiring masses. One great landmark was to be abandoned by them at once, namely, the great hill of Laon, with its noble cathedral church. The French Tenth Army entered that on the 13th, and went past it to advance on the line of the River Serre. Happily they found the Cathedral Church of Laon little damaged, though the wooded hill on which the town stands was battered and torn, the funicular railway destroyed, and the lower town between the railway and the hill in ruins. That, however, was to be expected, and was not much loss: it should at any rate be reckoned in extenuation of

German conduct that they left old Laon comparatively uninjured. After Laon had been restored to French hands, General Pétain slowed down his operations to give his troops time to refit and pull themselves together, so that during the next six days advance was slight.



Map showing the Direction of the French Armies closing on Laon

While Pétain was methodically and irresistibly manœuvring the Germans back east of the Oise, Haig was thrusting them back west of the river in a series of fierce rushes. On October 3 the opening move of a powerful gambit was made by General Braithwaite, who, attacking along an 8-mile front north of St. Quentin, broke through the powerful Beaufort defensive line and reached Montbrehain. Four thousand prisoners were captured in this attack. Farther north other

British troops forced passages over the Scheldt Canal at Le Catelet and Crevecoeur. This rendered the whole German holding on the Scheldt Canal precarious to the point of being impossible, and the British crossed it along its entire length from Cambrai to St. Quentin. These were the preliminaries to the formal opening of the second and last phase of the British offensive, by which the right of the First Army, the Third Army, and the Fourth Army moved forward with their left flank on the canal line running from Cambrai north-east to Mons, and with their right flank protected by General Debeney and the First French Army.

The first move on the large board was on the morning of October 8, when the British Third and Fourth Armies attacked over a 17-mile front, thus forming the left wing of a movement which extended right down past St. Quentin into Champagne and east of the Meuse—Debeney's, Berthelot's, Gouraud's, and Pershing's armies all being in action. (This was the day on which the Americans captured the villages Consenvoye, Brabant, and Haumont.) The Third Army began the attack at half-past four; the Fourth Army joined issue forty minutes later: the joint attack extended from Sequehart to south of Cambrai. The Germans at first fought strongly, but their resistance collapsed rather suddenly—an unusual feature, and one possibly to be ascribed to the rapidly deteriorating confidence of the rank and file. To the Germans was happening what had been witnessed in other armies: their best shock troops had been used

up. Those that remained could only be stiffened when in great numbers, while the absence of the strong defences to which they had long been accustomed still further impaired their resisting powers. The defences which the Third and Fourth British Armies were now attacking were only partially completed, and, when the first German resistance had been broken down, the Tanks and the infantry overran the rest of the lines to a depth of between 3 and 4 miles. To the Tanks the Germans never were able to put up counter-measures or really effective opposition.

The 66th Division (Major-General H. K. Bethell) and the 25th Division (Major-General J. R. E. Charles) captured Serain. The 38th Division, helped by the Tanks, forced their way into Villers Outreaux, though not without heavy fighting, and late in the afternoon went on to capture Malincourt. The New Zealand Division went straight through Lesdain and took Esnes. On the left centre the 3rd, 2nd, and 63rd Divisions had some of the heaviest fighting of the day, and were counter-attacked not merely by the German infantry but by German Tanks; but in spite of all the enemy could do these divisions captured Seranvillers, Forenville, and Niergnies. On the extreme left of the attack the 57th Division infiltrated the outskirts of Cambrai, and on the extreme right the 30th American Division took Brancourt and Premont. The characteristic of strong preliminary resistance and subsequent weakening was emphasized towards the end of the day, when the

German infantry practically refused to fight, and, though not actually running away in disorder, steadily retreated eastwards. Our airmen could see every road to Le Cateau blocked with the German troops and transport. We took our toll of both: 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns fell into our hands.

During the following night Canadian

opinion which he held of its value, and which he emphasized in his final dispatch to the point of declaring that, had the armistice not intervened, cavalry would have converted the retreat of the Germans into a rout.

By nightfall the British troops were within 2 miles of Le Cateau, had captured Bohain, and were attacking



British Official Photograph

In Captured Cambrai: some of the men of the North Lancashire Regiment who helped to take the town

patrols entered Cambrai from the north, joining hands with the 57th Division, which was working its way through the southern suburbs. At the same time the Canadian corps captured Ramillies and crossed the Scheldt Canal at Pont D'Aire. Next morning at daylight the Third and Fourth Armies began again as if they had never left off, and the badly beaten German army retreated before them, harried by our cavalry. Sir Douglas Haig, an old cavalryman, must have been proud to see his favourite arm at last justifying the

Caudry from the south. Cambrai was ours, the British troops were 3 miles east of it. Next day the progress continued, but as the Germans approached the good defensible line of the Selle River their leaders pulled them together, and the efforts of our cavalry to rush the crossings had to be abandoned. By nightfall of the 10th we had nevertheless reached the outskirts of Riquerval Wood and held the west bank of the Selle River as far as Viesly. Thence the line ran past St. Hilaire and Avesnes, taken by the Guards and 24th Division, to

the Scheldt at Thun St. Martin. On our right General Debeney (French First Army) had advanced his line east of St. Quentin, clearing the west bank of the Oise-Sambre Canal as far north as Bernot. In this, the battle of Le Cateau, we had with 20 British divisions, 1 American division, and 2 cavalry divisions soundly beaten 24 German divisions, despoiling them of 250 guns and 12,000 prisoners, and gaining full possession of that St. Quentin-Cambrai line of railway which our cavalry had prevented them from destroying. By October 13 we were on to the Selle River all along it, and had established bridge-heads for our subsequent crossing.

This advance was contemporaneous with two others, to the north and to the south, of which the second, the French movement which drove the Germans out of the Laon salient and on October 13 restored Laon to its rightful owners, has already been described. The evacuation of the salient became inevitable when the British advance threatened the German right. The other movement was in the Lens area. On October 7 the Germans had extended the flank of his withdrawal south of Lens, and on that day the 8th Division had taken Biache St. Vaast and Oppy with some hundreds of prisoners. The position thus gained became capable of further exploitation when Byng's victory on October 8 and 9 enlarged the radius of the German withdrawal; and the Lens advance continued with increasing rapidity. By the evening of October 13 British troops were in the outskirts of Douai and were close

up to the canal system on the whole front from Arleux (south of Douai) to Vendin le Vieil.

Between October 14 and 18 the great advance of British, Belgian, and French forces under the command of the King of the Belgians, which, as described in Chapter XII, swept like a scimitar from the coast north of the Lys, and freed Lille in its eastward progress, occupied attention to the exclusion of other movements. But these movements were maturing.

Field-Marshal Haig's attack on the centre was directed along the historic line which all armies have followed when invading Belgium from France, or France from Belgium. His strategical object was Namur, the meeting-place of the Sambre and the Meuse, and Maubeuge was the junction, the first stopping-place on the way to it. The first blow, which was struck in the neighbourhood of Le Cateau by the Fourth Army, was delivered on October 17, as soon as the communications behind the armies had been reorganized to the point of making supplies secure, and the general object, of which the attack was a part, was that of forcing the Selle River positions and pushing the front forward till its alignment ran from the Sambre-et-Oise Canal, Forest of Mormal, to Valenciennes. It was like the movement of a parallel ruler; but whereas the ruler along the Selle was at the moment of striking bent back north-westwards, from Le Cateau to the junction of the Sambre-et-Oise Canal with the Oise it ran straight north and south.

The French First Army was on the

west bank of the canal, which joins the Sambre to the Oise, and hence derives its name. The Fourth British Army went forward, with the First French Army, along a 10-mile front from Le Cateau southwards. This was a critical action and the Germans knew it, and the assaulting divisions had by no means a march past. The Fourth Army's assault was begun at the usual daylight hour by three corps, the 11th (46th Division, 1st Division, 6th Division), the 2nd American (1st Division and 6th Division), and 13th (50th Division and 66th Division). The attacking divisions had to negotiate very difficult, wooded country which the Germans held with considerable numbers of men (not fewer than ten divisions in fact) and with strongly-posted and well-served artillery. For two days the Germans fought well, though they could not hold the surging tide back. By the 19th it had washed them over the canal at all points south of Catillon, whence our line followed the valley of the Richemont, east and south of Le Cateau.

The Fourth Army's task had not been a light one. That of the Third Army, which, with the right flank cleared, now essayed to put the second part of the parallel advance into effect, was no easier. The Third Army, with a division from the First Army, was to force the Selle River north of Le Cateau. The troops employed, reading southwards to northwards, were (Third Army) 38th Division, 17th Division, 5th Division, 42nd Division, 62nd Division, Guards Division, 19th Division; and First Army (4th Division). This attack began

on the morning of October 20, immediately following the success of the Fourth Army in closing on the line of the Sambre-et-Oise Canal; and it proved no easier than its pre-



The Allied Line on October 18, 1918

decessor, the first part of the movement. The enemy had been afforded some time in which to reinforce the normal defences of the Selle River, and was fully wired along nearly the whole river length. He was also in sufficient numbers, and his position was sufficiently serious, to expend men in counter-attacks at every crossing. Nevertheless, when our Tanks had

once been got across the river the scale was turned. The infantry with their support, but only after severe fighting about Neuville, Amerval, Solesmes, and Haspres, secured possession of the high ground on the farther side of the river, and thence pushed out patrols as far as the River Harpies. North of Haspres other troops of the First Army continued to make progress on both sides of the Scheldt Canal, reaching the slopes overlooking the Ecaillon River and occupying Denain.

The line which had now to be attained was that roughly indicated by a line running from the Sambre-Oise Canal along the edge of the Mormal Forest to Valenciennes. The way in which our men broke it was as fine as anything in the unintermitted series of battles. The Germans had felled trees close by the river, their branches reaching part of the way across. By the aid of these, Scottish and English troops, who had been fighting a way forward unrelieved for 16 miles, dragged themselves half swimming across the river under heavy fire. Between Neuville and Montoy, where we had previously thrown over the river an outpost which no attack of the enemy had been able to evict, the Engineers ran a dozen plank bridges (of one plank width) across.

It was over these planks that our men, covered by the fire of the Worcesters, went to the attack of Amerval, on the opposite slope, and fought their way upward, crawling or running, to the highest ground. On the other side of Neuville, Lancashire and East Yorkshire men went through the

stream without bridges as best they could, finding ground that was deeply belted with wire on the lower slope, and, stumbling on a concealed trench, bayoneted its occupants. They were exposed to heavy fire from the north, where the enemy were entrenched along the railway line. Later in the day, under pressure of heavy counter-attacks delivered by fresh Germans on men who had swum and waded and fought, and then had held on through an exhausting day, some of the positions were lost. A number of outposts were driven back over the stream again, and at Amerval the high ground could not be maintained.

But despite this discouragement, the more bitter because success had been won in face of such difficulties, the men went at it again next morning as if nothing had happened. Something had happened nevertheless. The Engineers, as heroically resolute as any troops in the battle, had got bridges across. And what bridges! The pontoons could not be moored at the enemy side, so sappers, wading into the stream, made themselves into living piers, and stood waist-deep, or chest-deep, under German machine-gun fire, the bullets of which boiled in the water beside them. More than one pier fell mortally wounded, but thus they held the bridge while the infantry crossed it. Again the Germans tried to hold them up; again the concealed trench was entered and cleared out by Manchesters and East Yorks; again the high ground was won. But now the men were more secure of their gains, and from the ground occupied spread out fanwise,

northwards towards Briastre and the railway, south-eastwards behind Neuville.

Neuville and Briastre both presented problems. At Neuville there was a stout contingent of German cyclists, who, being picked men, always, or nearly always, gave a good account of themselves. Neuville, as was to be expected, bristled with machine-guns, which were in every house, and, it seemed, in every window, and were fired from the upper story of the church. The place was wired up to its windows, and the orchards and woods in which the village nestled were all nests of Germans. It took nearly a day to clear the last basement. At Briastre, farther north, the New Zealanders made the bag, and, having sent their prisoners back, went on up to the high ground beyond, capturing Bellevue. Then they joined with the men who had taken Neuville, and together worked towards Solesmes and St. Python.

Once, however, that the Selie line had been lost and won the advance promised to become more rapid. The weather had now become temporarily stormy, but Sir Douglas Haig, although prevented from ascertaining satisfactorily the positions of the enemy batteries, lost no time in pursuing his plan. His first front of attack stretched from east of Mazinghien to a point north-east of Haussy. On this 15-mile front the Fourth Army began what was practically a night attack. At a little after one o'clock in the morning of October 23 two corps went into action, the 9th (1st and 6th Divisions)

and the 13th (25th and 18th Divisions), and by the time daylight had disclosed their intentions the Germans disputed their advance strongly; while the unsubdued enemy artillery-fire made a hard task harder. The Third Army, which was to make the main attack, followed the Fourth into action, sending forward the 5th, 4th, 6th, and 17th Corps, comprising, in order, the 33rd and 21st Divisions (5th Corps), the 5th and 42nd Divisions (4th Corps), the 37th and New Zealand Divisions (6th Corps), and the 19th Division of the 17th Corps. The 19th Division held the most northerly position, and the other division of the 17th Corps, namely, the 61st, did not go into action until the next day, when with the 9th Division and the 51st Division of the First Army it extended the line of engagement for another 5 miles northward to the Scheldt. So far as the First Army was concerned, in the neighbourhood of Valenciennes the operation consisted in applying methodical encircling pressure on that place, and in making good the footing along the line of the Scheldt Canal and the River Ecaillon below it. The concerted movement of the Fourth and Third Armies, again, was not an assault, because there was no barrier to storm, but was a steady push forward, with the pressure varying at different points according as there were fortified villages, open country, or swamps to cross.

The morning of the attack was very misty; the Fourth Army's advance was made through a blanket of fog, to which the German guns had contributed a curtain of mephitic

gas from heavy but aimless bursts of gas-shells throughout the night. This, and the frequent little streams of the country, all wired, and all with their *chevaux de frise* of machine-guns, made the going an arduous matter. Yet, in spite of it, the troops went fast. In the northern sector (October

on the west edge of the wood, almost as soon as the army was in its stride. The Tanks did good work on the north side of the wood, especially south of Bousies.

Our attacks plunged the Germans in great confusion, for fugitives and reinforcements from the capacious



In the Great Advance: British Tanks moving forward and German prisoners coming in

23) the Third Army forced the crossing of the little River Harpies on a wide front, capturing the villages of Vertain, Romeries, and St. Martin, and thence going on to the next stream, St. George. Prisoners from eight German divisions were taken. Below Le Cateau, on the south side of the Le Cateau-Bavai road, the Fourth Army pushed straight eastwards from Baguel through the wood of L'Eveque, capturing Pommereuil,

reservoir of Mormal Wood met on the roads. But the German commanders handled a wild situation well, and jammed up their reserves despite losses, so that the fighting in the Bois l'Eveque, as well as at Bousies and Vendegies-sur-Ecaillon, on the extreme north, was fierce. To the British Tank there was opposed the German machine-gun; fortunate it was for us that the last word generally was spoken by the Tank.

The fighting went on all the 23rd and on the 24th as well. But on the 24th not only had Vendegies-sur-l'Ecaillon fallen to a clever enveloping attack by the 19th and 61st Divisions, but the western outskirts of the Forêt de Mormal had been reached; our troops were within a mile of Le Quesnoy, and to the north-west of that place had captured the villages of Ruesnes and Maings.

For the next three days the alternate cut and thrust of portions of the line gave us Englefontaine, and established the Third and Fourth Armies well to the north and east of the Le Quesnoy-Valenciennes railway, thence from the outskirts of Le Quesnoy past Sepmeries and Artres to Famars. Since breaking the Selle line, the British troops had forced in succession the crossings of the Ecaillon, the Harpies, the Rogneau, and the Rhonelle; and in the triangle formed by the Selle River, Le Quesnoy, and Valenciennes, had captured fifty villages, releasing immense numbers of civilians. Towards Valenciennes the Germans had been holding the line of the river—and especially the road running from Maresches to Artres and the high ground behind it—in great strength with many machine-guns. But when the stream had once been crossed our men stormed the slopes, and, breaking through, turned the enemy positions on the south.

This was too much for the defenders, who fled to Maresches in great confusion, leaving quantities of equipment as well as machine-guns and rifles behind them. But behind the

first ridge the Germans were strongly posted on another, on a line from Villers Pol to Le Quesnoy; and it was from this ridge that many heavy counter-attacks were delivered in the hope of driving us from the railway line and the village of Sepmeries, thus leaving our forces at Artres in the air. But to our troops, inspired with the spirit described by Napier as that of the winning army which moves forward irresistibly, spontaneously, as water down a slope, to victory over a beaten enemy, the German counter-attacks had now few terrors. The German movement completely broke down before our machine-gun and rifle fire, though it was driven forward with sacrificial hordes of men. When it was broken, and we had secured the passage of the Rhonelle, we proceeded to edge towards Valenciennes. It was on the way here that the great 51st Division added another leaf to its heavy laurels by beating off a heavy counter-attack on Maing, and immediately afterwards advancing to capture Famars.

While the fate of Valenciennes hung by a thread, a very interesting ceremony took place in Denain (October 23), one of the captures of the First Army. We had released its sore-tried civilians not many days before; but though the streets still echoed with the bursting of shells falling only a little distance from them, the people knew that now there would be no going back to the hands of the enemy. So they expressed alike their consciousness of restored citizenship and of gratitude to the Allies who had relieved them, by organizing

—if organizing could be said to have been necessary for any greetings so spontaneous and universal—a welcome to the Prince of Wales, who was accompanied by General Currie, and the Commanding Officer and staff and troops of the Canadian 4th

German eyes through the years of the captivity.) The flag was carried past the Prince and the staff, who saluted too. Then Prince and people went to the old church of St. Martins, where there were no choristers, but women's voices took the place of



Commemorating the Capture of Denain: the Prince of Wales (with General Currie and the leaders of the Canadian 4th Division) taking the salute at the march past of the Canadians who delivered the town from the Germans

Division. The Prince, the General, and the staff, were presented with bouquets by a bevy of *jeunes filles* in peasants' dress. Then, after the young, the old—a party of thirty veterans who had fought, and fought in vain, in 1870—paraded the streets with an old flag of that still forgotten war, marching through lines of Canadians who kept the streets and saluted the flag as it passed by. (It had been sedulously hidden from

theirs in the choir, and no tall, twinkling candles, but little odds and ends to light the altar, and no incense but the people's praise. The old *curé* spoke in fervent French of what Britain and Britain beyond the seas had done for this land of France, whose gratitude would be eternal. . . . and at the close of the service, through which the sound of guns could be heard, though it was little heeded, the Canadians marched past the

King's son, and French people cheered him and them as if both had been their own.

It must be borne in mind, when the attention is directed to what were the salient events of any day or days at this period, that though severe pressure was being applied at given points of the quaking German line, pressure of less severity was being exerted along the whole front. Thus, while the Third and Fourth Armies were pushing forward from the line of the Selle till the Fourth Army reached the edge of the old battle-field of Landrecies, farther north, between Valenciennes and Tournai, the First Army, pushing through the Raismes Forest, took Bruay. Towards Tournai, Bleharies and Espain had been captured. On October 26 the First Army pushed through the Raismes into the Condé loop of the Scheldt, so that the most casual glance at the map can descry the process of encirclement of Valenciennes going on day by day in the last week of October.

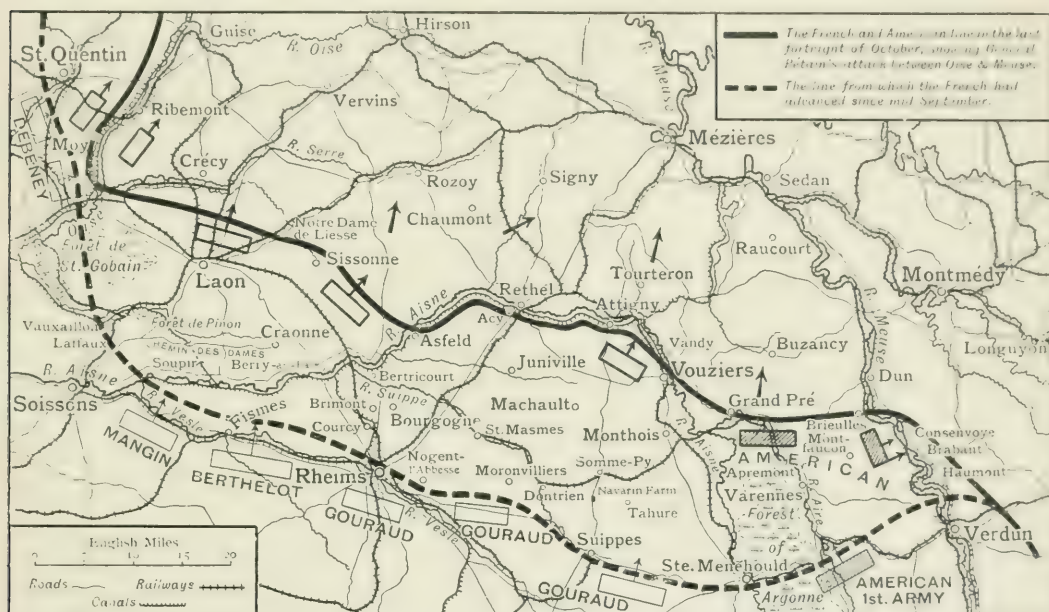
Nor will anyone suppose that our allies were idle. In Belgium the French army, under General Dégoutte, were improving their position east of the Lys, south-west of Ghent; and south of the Oise General Foch had given the signal to General Pétain to set his armies once again on the move. As the consequence of this bidding, three French armies, that of Debeney in *liaison* with ours, and those of Mangin and Guillaumat on the southern side of the last great German salient, began to prick onward. Debeney's advance, like that of Rawlinson, his coadjutor, had been

made during the last weeks of October as a consequence of a series of consecutive fights, the Germans, to their credit, disputing every wood and every hill and every swamp. It was Debeney's business to *menager les hommes*—to save his men and not use them up in costly frontal attacks unless such were vital, but to go round when he could. Nevertheless, sacrifice and gallantry were always his to command, and one manœuvre deserves special mention. It consisted in bringing troops north to south and over the Oise for an attack on the Germans in the Oise-Serre salient. Bridges had to be thrown across both the Oise and the Serre to permit free movement of troops and artillery. The starting-point chosen was the Mont d'Origny, but the Germans flooded all the country to the east of it. The French held on to their position, and by skilful advances Debeney continued the damaging work consecrated in Joffre's famous phrase of "nibbling them", to the extent of taking 3000 prisoners between October 24 and 27.

The value of the Mont d'Origny bridge-head became evident on October 28, when General Pétain sent into action the armies of General Mangin and Guillaumat, with that of General Debeney as southern pivot. These three armies began to advance on the important junction of Hirson by pressing on the German salient between the Oise, Péron, Serre, Souche, and Aisne Rivers. The value of the Mont d'Origny bridge-head, which Debeney had secured, was that it neutralized the advantage which the Germans had hoped to receive in

protecting the left of their front by the flooded Oise valley. The Serre salient then became a huge embarrassment to the Germans, but, as its premature loss would have been more than an embarrassment, they fought their hardest to avert disaster. Nevertheless, on October 28, Debeney crossed the Péron, and Guillaumat,

A word should perhaps be said here about a subtle influence which we were able to bring to bear on the weakening German troops. For long they had no news of what was happening on their own front, or elsewhere, except what their commanders chose to tell them, and this was seldom, at this period, the truth. But



The French and American Line during the last fortnight of October, 1918

between Sisson and Château Porcien, on the Aisne, took 3000 prisoners to add to Debeney's bag. Before the end of the month the First French Army was close on Guise; the three French armies moved by Pétain had taken 10,000 prisoners in the last week.

By this time the rapid succession of blows dealt in the latter part of October—chiefly, it can be pointed out, by the British armies—had exercised a cumulative effect both moral and material on the German armies.

an automatic balloon service, which every day released thousands of leaflets in the German lines, and far behind them, even to Germany, acquainted every German who could read or appreciate a map, a diagram, or a picture, with the extent of German losses, German retreats, and American reinforcements. It told them the "news of the day" twenty-four hours after it had happened, not only from the Western Front, but from the Eastern and South-eastern Fronts, where the capitulation of Bulgaria and Turkey

and the imminent collapse of Austria—consequent on Allied successes which the desperate position on the Western Front made Germany powerless to arrest—had rendered Germany's situation impossible. There was only one thing she might have done, short of immediate capitulation, and that was to have withdrawn her armies to the shorter line of the Meuse. That was what Ludendorff despairingly advocated (and what ultimately Hindenburg refused to do); and if it could have been done the struggle might have been protracted through the winter. As late as October 11, when Mr. Churchill delivered a speech predicting for us "victory next year", it did not seem a plan wholly impracticable; and the British War Cabinet rightly considered it as a possibility. But by the end of October that hope—and that danger—had vanished. Sir Douglas Haig had gathered his armies into a position to prevent such a retirement, by directly attacking a vital point, and so, by anticipating the enemy's withdrawal, to force an immediate conclusion.

The preliminary to this finishing stroke was the taking of Valenciennes. Sir Douglas Haig, with no mind to lose an hour, meant to begin business as soon as possible in November, so as to leave no time or opportunity to the enemy for further "orderly withdrawals". Accordingly, in the early morning of November 1, the 17th Corps of the Third Army and the 22nd and Canadian corps of the Fourth Army attacked on a front of about 6 miles south of Valenciennes. They pushed on from a line by

Famars, and by noon had reached the railway where it crosses between the Scheldt Canal and the Rhonelle on the immediate southern edge of the city. The Canadians took large numbers of machine-guns, as well as prisoners. The struggle went on all day, and during the following night and early morning the British troops, among whom the 61st Division (Major-General G. F. Duncan), 49th Division (Major-General H. J. G. Cameron), and the 4th Division (Major-General C. H. T. Lucas) greatly distinguished themselves, fought their way up from the south on both sides of the Rhonelle, and reached the southern outskirts of Marly at dawn. They captured Maresches and Preseau after a stubborn struggle, and established themselves on the high ground 2 miles to the east of it.

On their left the Canadians got across the Scheldt Canal by a pontoon bridge which their engineers constructed, and a brigade of the Canadian 4th Division was the first to enter the town at a little before six in the morning. Pushing through the streets, and shooting some isolated machine-gunners who were still at work in the streets, they reached the Town Hall at ten, and hauled down the German flag—though the rattle of German machine-guns was still to be heard. The Germans in withdrawing naturally continued to shell the town they had left. The men who took down the German flag were two officers of a Canadian field battery, and they promptly put the French tricolor in its place. Im-

mediately two Frenchmen, M. Durand and M. Valery, got a ladder and ran up the British ensign by its side. Valenciennes, like other towns occupied by the Germans, had suffered from the invaders' greed, brutality, and incorrigible custom of thieving. A fortnight before they left it for good, the systematic destruction of buildings began, beginning with those along the canal, continuing with others, mainly the steel and iron factories, and, to round off the picture, the tower of one of the finest churches, the *Sacre Cœur de Valenciennes*.

A day before the attack on Valenciennes, the British, French, and Americans co-operated in pushing forward the line from the Scheldt to the sea on its southern face. Towards the end of October the line held by the Germans ran from the Dutch frontier and the Lys Canal, past Ghent by Deynze, in front of Audenarde to the Scheldt, near Avelghem, north-west of Renaix. It was on the sector from Deynze on the Lys to the Scheldt that the attack on a 14-mile front was directed. The sector assigned to the British forces of the Second Army was from Avelghem to Anseghem, not much more than 3 miles, though the whole country, intersected with streams, each with tributary rivulets, and dotted with woods, was very awkward for advancing troops. The British share was not a massive one; all that the troops had to do was to clear the triangle of ground for a distance of some 5 or 6 miles on the west side of the Scheldt from Avelghem to Meersche; and this our men did in

thoroughly workmanlike fashion. After going through the southern part of Anseghem, Scottish and Welsh troops pushed on through Gyselbrechteghem, while other Scottish troops, Rifles and Borderers, kept pace with them on their right, and Lancashires and Durhams cleared the river bank by Berchem to Meersche. They took a thousand prisoners.

On their left the French troops, who went through the northern part of Anseghem, had a nasty job at Anseghem Château, which was a German machine-gun fortress. The fortress had to be reduced. When there were no more Germans left in it, the French went on fast to Mooreghem and Eekhout, only 3 miles west of Audenarde, and settled themselves all along the river bank. On their left again, and farther north, the Americans also had their work cut out: the hardest part of it at one of the patches of woodland, Spitaal's Wood, north-west of Mooreghem, wired and trenched, blockhoused and machine-gunned. The Americans dealt with it like old soldiers, and those of the garrison who were not killed were taken prisoners. At the end of two days' fighting the Americans had freed the Gaverbeek, captured Waereghem, and reached the Laudbeek.

As a consequence of the defeat at Valenciennes, the Germans began to withdraw on the front between there and Le Quesnoy; and there were indications that a further withdrawal was contemplated both in the Tour-nai salient, where the line of the Scheldt had been turned by the operations just described, and also

in the area to the south of the Third and Fourth Armies, where the enemy's position had also been undermined by our advance. Sir Douglas Haig was ready to make such retirements costly. The front of his decisive attack, which was delivered by the First, Third, and Fourth Armies on November 4, extended on a front of 30 miles from Valenciennes to the River Sambre. The way for the infantry was paved by as intense a bombardment as ever the war had witnessed, and the barrage that heralded their advance was perfect. They followed, and all day the pressure was never relaxed, so that by the evening they had made a general advance of 5 miles—5 miles along a fighting, not a marching front!—and had reached the general line Fesmy, Landrecies, the heart of the Forêt de Mormal, Wargnies-le-Grand, 5 miles east of Valenciennes, Onnaing, and the Scheldt Canal opposite Thiers.

On the front of the First Army the 22nd Corps and the Canadians advanced eastwards out of the Valenciennes area, and had little opposition except on their right. There the 11th and 56th Divisions, having crossed the Aunelle River and the flooded area (which the Germans had believed to be a defence), captured the villages of Le Triez, Sebourg, and Sebourquiaux. Here they were counter-attacked on the high ground east of the flooded area and above the Aunelle, and had some difficulty in holding on. However, they did hold on, and the Germans subsequently retired. The 4th and 3rd Canadian Divisions on their left reached the

outskirts of Raubies and the eastern side of the marshes north of Valenciennes.

The Third Army's lighter task was also in the area, on its left, where the 17th Corps was operating. But sharp fighting took place about Wargnies-le-Petit. This place and Wargnies-le-Grand were taken by the 24th Division (Major-General A. C. Daly) during the afternoon, while the 19th Division captured Bry and Eth. The other corps and divisions of the Third Army had been fighting nearly everywhere before breaking down the enemy's resistance. Opposite Orsinval the 62nd Division of the 6th Corps opened the ball by taking that village, and then let up the Guards on their left, both divisions going on together thenceforward. They captured Fresnoy Preux-au-Sort, and reached the western outskirts of Commegnies.

On the 4th Corps front the 37th Division and the New Zealand divisions went forward with a bound; were counter-attacked very soon north of Ghissignies; smashed the counter-attack to pieces—and still went on. The 37th Division took Louvignies and Jolimetz and 1000 prisoners, and before sunset were deep in Mormal Forest. To the New Zealanders fell the honour of taking Le Quesnoy, a proud name to write on their flags. They surrounded it by breakfast-time, but without attempting to take it by direct assault swept far past it, to take Herbignies by the evening. Others dealt with Le Quesnoy, which is an old fortified town with earthen ramparts that have witnessed many sieges. Though the New Zealanders

had too much sense to try to rush its modernized adaptations of defence, they carried the outer circuit of the ramparts, and worked right round the place both north and south, till their two parties, which each had plenty of bombing and bayoneting on the way, joined hands again. This small guard remained while the other New Zealanders who had gone on were busy among the German guns, of which this division alone took 100, with wagons and personnel all but complete—the most striking testimony of the demoralization of the German artillery.

Meanwhile our aeroplanes were dropping invitations to the beleaguered Germans to surrender—with no effect. Offers of a similar kind under the white flag were made, and also were refused, though the enemy prudently refrained from firing on the flag. So, losing patience, the New Zealanders in the afternoon fought their way from the ramparts to the streets; and then the German commanding officer came out and made formal surrender of himself and his garrison of 1000 men—just for all the world as if Le Quesnoy had been put back into the wars of the Middle Ages. Besides the immediate area of Le Quesnoy, other stiff fighting took place on the Third Army's front—especially at first. On the army's extreme right the 17th and 38th Divisions made the most rapid advance of the day, and reached Locquignol and the wide open glades of the forest known as Les Grands Pâtures, by midday. Next day they pushed on without a check to the forest's edge. The 17th Division after its sharp fighting about Locqui-

gnol pressed forward a mile farther east.

The Fourth Army's task was heavier than that of its coadjutors, and one of the greatest feats of the day was performed on its right, where we were in touch with the French under General Debeney. The 1st Division of the 9th Corps, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sir W. P. Braithwaite, captured Catillon, and at once proceeded to pass troops across the River Sambre here and at the lock 2 miles to the south. Engineers had succeeded in getting ready light bridges, over which some of the attacking troops poured, but others got across the 30 yards of open water in canoes or on rafts, or by swimming. The Germans were in great numbers; they had, as usual, plenty of machine-guns, but two hours after Braithwaite's attack had begun the 1st Battalion Cameron Highlanders and the 1st Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment were east of the river. Bois l'Abbaye, Hautreuve, and La Groise were captured in turn, and though at Fesmy a body of German cyclists and machine-gunners tried to put a spoke in the wheel, the new troops, storming up, took this place also and marched eastwards.

Left of the 1st Division, the 32nd Division also had the river to cross, and no easier task in doing it. They had to fight very hard for their crossing at Ors; but, having won it, they streamed over to capture Mézières and Heurtebise, and to lay hands on La Folie. Having gained a footing there, other troops, which had crossed elsewhere, advanced on either side

and took it. These supports came from the neighbourhood of Landrecies, an historic place in this war, for there, four years before, the town had been won and lost, lost and won, and left. Now it was to remain. A battalion of the 1st Prussian Guard Reserve Division had been specially detailed to hold the bridge-head here. They could not. Troops of the 28th Division drove them out, crossed the Sambre by raft and life-belt and by swimming, and made Landrecies ours. Meanwhile the whole 13th Corps, under command of Lieutenant-General Sir T. L. N. Morland, who had attacked with the 18th and 50th Divisions, as well as with the 25th at Landrecies, had overrun all the rest of the enemy's positions in his front and had captured Preux-au-Bois, where the Germans had put up one of those strong resistances which used to be the rule but were now becoming the exception.

On the right of Sir Douglas Haig's attack, our tried friend, General Debeney, made a vigorous thrust in conjunction with ours on a 6-mile front east of Wassigny, between Oisy and Tapigny. By midday the Sambre Canal had been crossed, and a satisfactory advance made all along the line. The work of Haig's armies, coupled with that of the First French Army, is to be regarded as one movement—the final blow at the German centre, which was indeed irremediable in its effects. But south of it Pétain was already moving to cripple the German left wing. The steady pressure between the Aisne and the Meuse, which had been augmented on November 2, just before Haig's

masterpiece was ready, had been very damaging. The Argonne had been completely cleared of the enemy; the French reached the line of the Ardennes Canal, and occupied the vital front of Le Chêne; and the Americans on their right, so long hampered by their transport, now got a move on—to use their own vernacular—and reached Beaumont and Stenay.

The Americans had done well. In two days the American First Army, under General Liggett, had advanced over a front of 18 miles a distance of 13 miles forward, while they met, defeated, and shepherded in front of them some seven German divisions. They tore from them 100 guns and took more than 5000 prisoners. Again, to adopt the vernacular — "Some victory!" The bulk of the work was done on the first day, when not only were formidable positions captured to a depth of about 6 miles, but a very large number of prisoners and guns, including eight intact batteries, were captured. Resistance broke up after the first blow, and the second and subsequent days were days of long strides and few stops. It was not till the Americans were within sight of the vital Mézières railway, and within sight of the Luxemburg frontier, that the German resistance in any way stiffened.

Leaving these successes out of the question, it is now apparent that Haig's crushing of the German forces in the centre was the nearest approach to a single decision that the war had witnessed, or was likely to witness. The German resistance was broken. On the night of the 4th and 5th the German troops began to fall back

along the whole front, and, despite continuous rain, which imposed hardships on our men such as they bore lightly, for they were conscious that the enemy was far worse off, our infantry and cavalry went forward with hardly a check, close on the heels of the defeated troops. On November 5 the Fourth Army, the hardest part of its work done, went irresistibly forward on a 4-mile front, penetrating beyond Prisches and Maroilles. The Third Army was equally favoured. The 5th, 21st, and 33rd Divisions left Mormal Forest behind them; other troops were close on Bavai and within 10 miles of Mons. Only the First Army (which had had the easiest going at the beginning) now began to find the Germans holding them. They had regained the ridge east of the Aunelle, but, after capturing Roisin, Meaurain, and Angreau, found the German resistance stiffening in front of the divisions of their 22nd Corps where it approached Ancre and the Honnelle River. But any stoppage of their retreat cost the Germans dear, for the roads behind their front were packed with troops and transport which furnished to our bombing planes targets that could not be missed. On November 6 the Germans made yet another attempt to delay the First Army and a part of the Third Army on the same front, but they could not hold Ancre or the line of the Honnelle River, and the Canadians took Baisieux and Quievrechain. It was almost the Germans' last flutter, for they moved away in the night, and on November 7 the Guards Division entered Bavai.

What was happening, to sum up the situation broadly, was that before the six Allied armies, the First, Third, and Fourth British, and the First, Tenth, and Fifth French, stretched from the Canal de Condé, in the north, to the Aisne in the south, the Germans had set off as fast as they were able for the Meuse. During the night of November 7-8 great explosions shot up behind the German lines, the evidence of destroyed ammunition dumps, and on the following morning the 8th Corps and the 1st Corps (Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Holland) were able to move forward and cross the Scheldt on a wide front south of Antoining. Condé was taken, and farther north the bridge-head at Tournai became ours.

On the 8th (the day when the German delegates for the armistice, which Germany was now seeking, arrived somewhere across the French frontier in their search for General Foch) the French, along the southern part of the moving front, were moving rapidly forward, and the German retirement was becoming a race for safety. One striking capture had been made during these concluding days, and it fell to the Americans. It was Sedan, of which the western half, lying on the left bank of the Meuse, was entered by them on November 6. The bridge had been destroyed; the valley flooded. But by the capture of Sedan the German railway line of communication between the fortress of Metz and his troops in Northern France and Belgium was closed to him. Thenceforward the German Western Front, while it existed, must have operated in two

halves, fed by separate and, in one case, by desperately untrustworthy communications. The American *communiqué*, in modestly chronicling the success of its First Army, added that since November 1 it had taken 250 guns and more than 2000 machine-

11 the French were in Hirson, the Meuse had been turned, and Mézières had been surrounded.

The position in front of the British armies was no less demonstrably fatal to German hopes of salvation. On November 9 the enemy were in full



Canadian War Records

Mons on the last day of Fighting: Canadian troops, headed by their pipers, entering the town after its recapture on November 11, 1918

guns. From the Oise, Serre, and Aisne Rivers the German armies were now rushing on Charleville-Mézières, on which all railways converge. Thenceforward they would have had but one line of railway by which to escape; and on this junction the First American Army and General Gouraud's army were advancing in all haste. But in truth the German situation was desperate; by November

retreat before all the British armies. The fortress of Maubeuge was entered by the Guards division and the 62nd Division (Major-General Sir R. D. Whigham) while the Canadians were approaching Mons. The Fifth Army was pushing on at the gallop and had taken Tournai; the Second Army had crossed the Scheldt as it pleased, and was knocking at the doors of Renaix. Next day, the 10th, the five British

armies went on as one line, nothing to stop them, almost in review order, cavalry and cyclists in front.

At Mons was the last show of German resistance. It was well that it should be so. Canadians, working round it, encountered the last bitter machine-gun defiance of the war. To Canadians, who had consecrated Passchendaele with their blood, was given the high honour of taking that place, the name of which will always be linked, while the war is remembered, with the stand which Britain's old regular army made for freedom when the war began. In the early morning of November 11, 1918, the 3rd Canadian Division captured Mons, the whole of the German defending force being killed or taken prisoners. The war had only a few hours more to last. At eleven o'clock the armistice came into operation, and in Mons the mayor presented the commanding officer of the Canadian 7th Infantry Brigade with the keys of the city in honour of its recapture. There was a formal march past with the pipers of a Montreal Highland battalion, the first to enter the city, leading the way. But, says a correspondent, who described the scene and added a last sentence to the description:

"The front line is silent as the grave. Our outposts stand chatting, boldly silhouetted against the sky-line, and no longer death screams overhead or speeds his whistling shot".

The war was over. At the hour of the armistice the right of the Fourth Army was east of the Franco-Belgian frontier, and thence north-

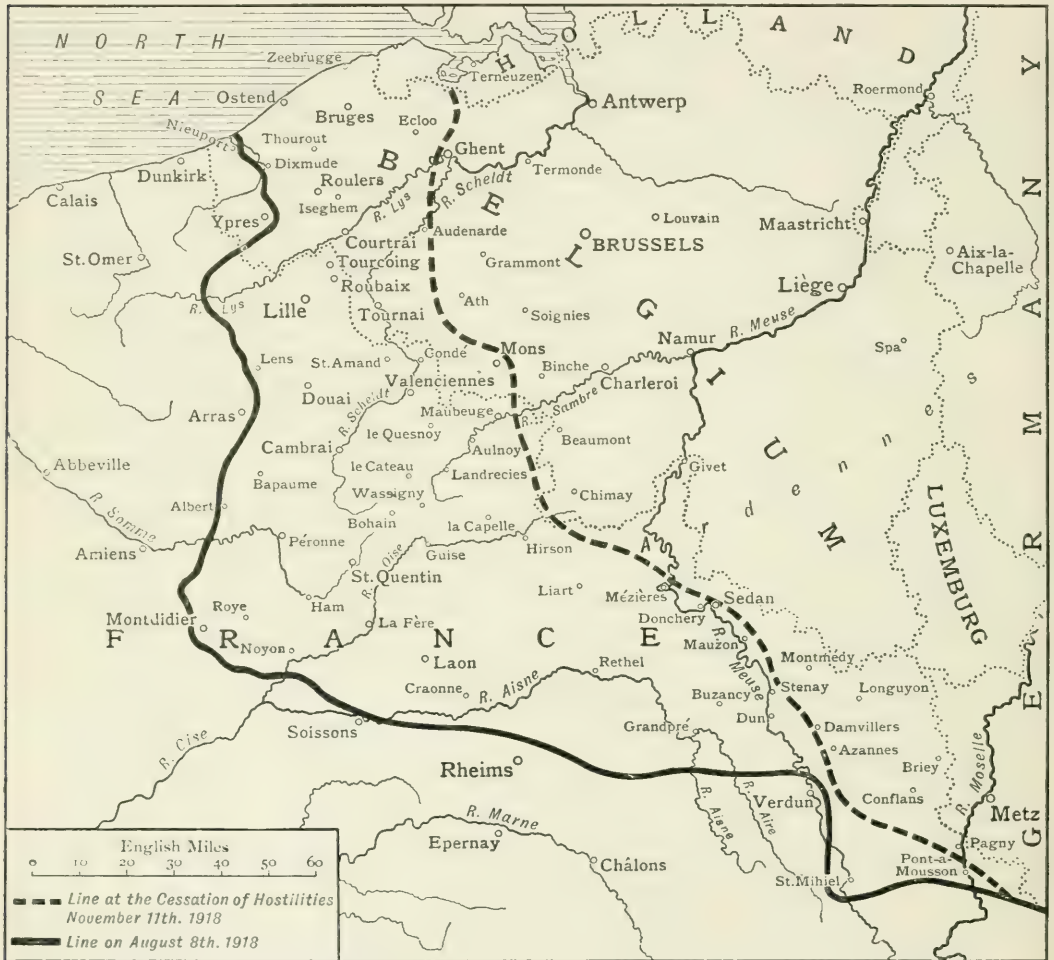
wards our troops had reached the line Sivry-Erquelines-Jurbise-Hergnies-Ghislenghien-Lessines-Grammont. The great change had been visible in its approach to tutored eyes for some weeks, but the suddenness of its realization took the world by surprise, as well it might, for it had been effected in ten days. Since November 1 the British troops attacking the German centre had in fact pierced it, had broken its power of resistance, if not of cohesion, and had forced on it a disorderly retreat. A continuance of hostilities could only have meant disaster to the German armies and an armed invasion of Germany.

This the German army leaders understood, though Germany was long in realizing it. The Kaiser had begged Hindenburg for one last stand on the line of the Meuse. That shrewd veteran refused. Better, in his point of view, armies safely withdrawn than mopped up by enemies only too eager for the opportunity: and some of his shrewd sense had permeated to civilian Germany, where coming starvation hastened a decision of another kind. The steps may be briefly indicated, omitting some frantic appeals by Germany to President Wilson to save them from the consequences of their own actions. On October 28 Ludendorff resigned; on October 30 Turkey was granted an armistice; on November 3 Austria-Hungary surrendered, and there was a mutiny at Kiel. On November 4, following Mr. Wilson's last note to Germany, full powers were conferred on Marshal Foch to deal with any application for an armistice which

The Great World War

Germany might make. On the same day it was reported that a Commission had been appointed in Germany to devise means of agreement concerning the expected armistice. It consisted

American armies, that since they had neither wings to fly, nor could they swim, they would not come. Count Oberndorff and the Reichstag representatives were added later. They



Map showing approximately the Allied Line on August 8, 1918, and on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918

of General von Gundell, military delegate to the Hague Peace Conference, 1907; General von Winterfeld, former military attaché in Paris; Admiral von Müller; and the ex-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Admiral von Hintze—the genius who once said of the

were received by Marshal Foch on November 8 in a wood behind the front, having been brought thither by special train. With Marshal Foch was Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, First British Sea Lord. Herr Erzberger at once informed Marshal Foch

that he had been instructed to ask for an immediate suspension of hostilities. Marshal Foch, in reply, informed them that this request had been foreseen in the terms of the armistice previously settled at Versailles, and could not be granted. Marshal Foch then read the full text of these terms. There was no discussion. The Germans had seventy-two hours in which to decide to take them or take the consequences. The chief terms were as follows:—

Immediate evacuation of invaded countries, Belgium, France, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg, so ordered as to be completed in fourteen days after the signing of the Armistice.

Surrender in good condition of the following equipment:—

- 5000 guns (2500 heavy, 2500 field).
- 30,000 machine-guns.
- 3000 *Minenwerfer*.
- 2000 aeroplanes.

Surrender (naval) of:

- 6 battle cruisers.
- 10 battleships.
- 8 light cruisers.
- 50 destroyers of the most modern types.
- All submarines, including all submarine cruisers and minelayers.
- Disarming of all other surface war-ships.

Repatriation of all inhabitants of the countries occupied by German troops.

- 5000 locomotives.
- 150,000 wagons.
- 5000 motor-lorries.

In good working order, to be delivered within the fourteen days fixed for the evacuation of the occupied countries.

Evacuation of the German armies of all territory on the left bank of the Rhine. These countries to be occupied by Allied and United States garrisons "holding the principal crossings of the Rhine (Mayence, Coblenz, Cologne), together with bridge-

heads at these points of a 30-kilometre [about 19 miles] radius on the right bank, and by garrisons similarly holding the strategic points of the regions.

"A neutral zone shall be set up on the right bank of the Rhine between the river and a line drawn 10 kilometres [$6\frac{1}{4}$ miles] distant, starting from the Dutch frontier to the Swiss frontier. In the case of inhabitants, no person shall be prosecuted for having taken part in any military measures previous to the signing of the Armistice.

"All German troops at present in any territory which before the war belonged to Russia, Rumania, or Turkey shall withdraw within the frontiers of Germany as they existed on August 1, 1914, and all German troops at present in territories which before the war formed part of Russia must likewise return to within the frontiers of Germany as above defined as soon as the Allies shall think the moment suitable, having regard to the internal situation of these territories.

"Unconditional surrender of all German forces operating in East Africa within one month."

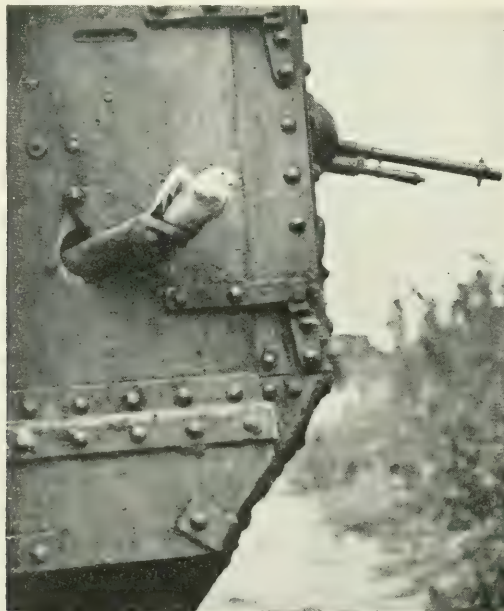
The treaties of Bucharest and of Brest-Litovsk were declared null and void. Our blockade was to be maintained, but we were to have free access to the Baltic and the Black Sea, all the parts of which Germany was to evacuate.

The Germans complained at these conditions. They had no option but to accept them, and their acceptance is evidence of the completeness of the German collapse. The Allies had triumphed. Their strategic plan had succeeded despite the crushing handicap of Russia's defection. One who is no great friend of Britain has said that perhaps not till a century hence will she understand how great was her triumph, and how overwhelmingly important her share in this great war. Apart from the work of the navy, without which the war must have been lost, admiration pauses before the

spirit and achievement of those wonderful armies that Britain created. The Regular Army, the immortal "Old Contemptibles", set the example, the standard, the spirit, and the New Army took it from them, and upheld their tradition. All that was best in the old Regular Army, wrote Sir Douglas Haig, its discipline, based on force of character, leadership, and mutual respect, its traditions, and the spirit that never knows defeat, were the foundations on which the new armies were built up. Drawn from every sphere of life, from every profession, department, and industry of the British Isles, and thrust into a new situation full of unknown difficulties, all ranks devoted their lives and energies to the service of their country whole-heartedly. They understood the issues at stake. The life

of the British Empire proved sound under the severest test; and behind the army at the front was the civilian army of men and women at home who gave their thought, their prayers, their work to the soldiers. Neither did they fail. In all the dark years of the war their trust and confidence never wavered; their labours never ceased; and no sacrifices, hardships, or privations were too heavy to be borne, provided that thereby the needs of the troops might be adequately supplied. The dauntless spirit of the people at home—"this decent, dauntless people", as Henry James called us—strengthened and sustained the invincible spirit of the army and the navy. Once more—in the words of the Commander-in-Chief—the life of the British Empire proved sound.

E. S. G.



British Official Photograph

A Message of Peace from one of the New Ships of War
Releasing a carrier pigeon from a British Tank.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

BRIEF
D
0055514
V.8

UTL AT DOWNSVIEW



D RANGE BAY SHLF POS ITEM C
39 09 09 19 10 012 9